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THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

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THE

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO

The Priesthood of Believers,

AND THE

FREE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

"YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION; A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD."
1 Pet. ii. 9.

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, & DYER.

1867.

110. k. 230.

NOTICE TO THE READER.

THE following is an abridgment of a work published about ten years ago, in America, under a somewhat different title. Various alterations have been made in the original text, which, without affecting the general character of the work, will, it is believed, tend to remove occasional obscurities in the style, and to bring the subjects treated on—subjects especially important at the present day—still more clearly before the mind of the reader.

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THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN ROME.

"As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."—ROMANS xii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

CHAPTER I.

PRIESTHOOD.

§ 1. *Definition.*

IT will be important to settle in limine the meaning that is ordinarily attached to the word "Priest." A priest is a person consecrated to the priestly office, by an order of priests already existing, and supposed, in virtue of this consecration, to be endowed with a character, giving him privileges in divine things above those of his fellow-worshippers who are not consecrated as he is.

In the Levitical institutions, we find the priest greatly exalted in the service of God above the people, because the Levitical order was, till the coming of Christ, a type of the company of the faithful under the High Priest, who was eminently a type of Christ Himself; the whole of the worship, the burning of the offerings on the altar, the presenting of every *zebach* and *mincha*, of every *korban* and *olah** in the temple, and the performance of every religious ceremony, were the exclusive privilege and duty of "the priests, the sons of Aaron." The most

* *Zebach*, the slaughtered-offering; *Mincha*, the meat-offering of inanimate things offered by fire; Korban, an offering generally; *Olah*, a burnt-offering.

important of the Levite's sacerdotal functions was to make an atonement for the sins of those that came to him to have their sins removed through his mediation. "And *the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.*" (Lev. iv. 20.) "And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing; and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he has sinned." (Lev. v. 5, 6.)

In the above definition of "a priest," we have stated that such an one "is a person consecrated to the sacerdotal office by an order of priests already existing." This is deemed absolutely indispensable to constitute a human priesthood; whereas every true member of the church of Christ, who has received the seal of the Spirit, is a priest in the gospel sense; and if, with that seal, he has received also the gift of preaching, and the church accept his gift, he is a "prophet," and may deliver that knowledge which he has received. Paul declares he was an apostle, "not of men, neither by man;" that is, he was no priest according to the received ideas and ancient custom; nobody had ordained him; no son of Aaron had anointed him with oil, and arrayed him in the consecrated ephod; the corporation of priests were not at all concerned or consulted in his ordination. If he had thought the apostolical succession indispensable in establishing the validity of his office, he might most easily have sought out the "archbishops" (as the apostles *are deemed by some to* have been) and have received

consecration from their hands. But he had other views, and what those views were he has stated very plainly: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia." So he began preaching and teaching without human ordination; and so little did he think it requisite to be ordained by the apostles that he purposely avoided it, as is clearly intimated in the epistle to the Galatians.

This, then, is to be "an apostle not of men, neither by man," and is the true apostolical succession, for the honour of which the church of Christ has good reason to be jealous.

To distinguish, by a broad line of demarcation, between "the clergy" and "laity;" to act as if we supposed that a certain order of men had the power of admitting candidates into their body corporate, or that their interference, or even assistance, was indispensable in opening the door of the ministry to those whom the grace of God had previously selected to teach the truth, is, in fact, to take away from the glory of Him who sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, and who, by the gift of repentance and remission of sins, rules as a Prince in his Israel, and anoints all his true servants to be kings and priests to God and his Father.

As one great aim of the son of perdition has been

to destroy the priesthood of grace, and exalt the priesthood of man, and as this his work has too successfully transformed the oneness of the believing body into "clergy and laity," so should it now be the unremitting labour of the servants of the Lord to undo his work; to go back again to the fountain of original purity, and there, in a thorough cleansing of holiness, to recover the fair image of primeval simplicity. And for this purpose it behoves us not to tolerate any ancient custom, any received formulary of words, by which it is possible that the understanding of believers may be led, unawares, into a train of thought bordering on the old delusion. We have all an inherent tendency to that delusion: without this tendency, the papacy never could have achieved that mighty dominion which it formerly secured for itself: for, what is the papacy but an accommodation, in all things, to the unhallowed desires of the natural man? How careful, then, should we be to avoid the paths wherein it is even *possible* to lapse into old errors! How cautious to shun the stumbling-blocks which are thickly set by Satan in every high-road and by-path of the journey! "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, *all things* are become new!" He comes to see the many privileges of the church; a spiritual temple, a spiritual altar, a spiritual High-priest, a spiritual company of priests anointed by God the Holy Ghost, and by Him appointed, and sent forth to exercise their gifts in any office He chooses for them; a fraternity *of spiritual kings*, who shall reign with their

God for ever; enjoying spiritual union with the exalted Head of the church,—perfect God and perfect man,—who has taught his servants this unspeakable mystery, that they "are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Now, in order to recover these privileges, our duty is to place the gospel ministry in a clear light; to bring it forth in open day; and to deprive it of the false effect produced by shadowy back-grounds, and the picturesque accompaniments of antiquity. If the churches of Rome, of England, or other countries, have their orders—if they, in perfect consistency with their system, make their priests first breathe the sacerdotal life through the laying on of prelatical hands—we cannot be at a loss for the line of conduct which we ought to pursue, in ceasing to imitate or tolerate their example.

It is but justice to remark in this connection, that one sect, if sect it may be called, has approached perhaps nearer the truth concerning the priesthood than any other, and, entirely levelling every remnant of distinction between clergy and laity, has at last produced a system framed on the fundamental doctrine, that "the old covenant" having "decayed and waxed old," ought "to vanish away." This sect is the Quakers; a body of men who seemed determined to investigate this question, without the least regard to the trammels of preconceived opinions and settled customs; and though, by such a method of investigation, they may have been in danger of running into some extra-

vagances, they were also sure to discover some truths unknown, denied, or detested by their contemporaries: for so great are the delusions of every generation, that he who systematically opposes the opinions of the age in which he lives, can hardly fail to liberate some truths from the captivity of error. The Quakers, then, are entitled to the whole credit of having placed the sacerdotal controversy in its true light; and they not only stated the truth, but *acted* on it, guarding their opinions with such a watchful discipline, that it became impossible for their successors to misunderstand or misinterpret their meaning. To acknowledge a priest in any way, directly or indirectly, is, in fact, to cease to be a Quaker. And herein is their wisdom deserving the highest admiration; for they acknowledge and act upon this great maxim, that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the only Priest that has any pre-eminence, and that the whole body of believers are priests in perfect equality one with another, in and through Him, their Head and Lord. One of the early Quakers was, therefore, right when he said, "we are not persons that have shot up out of the old root into another appearance, as one sect hath done out of another, till many are come up one after another, the ground still remaining out of which they all grow; but that very ground hath been shaking, destroyed and is destroying, removed and is removing in us." *

* Life of William Dewsbury; London, 1836, p. 5.

§ 2. *Priesthood the prerogative common to all Christians.*

Christianity can never be fully developed, nor can the points of difference between Christ and Anti-Christ ever be fully settled, till the liberty of the ministry to all believers, and the ordination by the Holy Spirit of all the members of the mystical body be fully understood, and admitted as entirely valid and sufficient. This is the axe that strikes at the root of the tree of Popery, indestructible by any other instrument, but, by this, ultimately to be uprooted. To deny all distinction between clergy and laity, prohibits, *in limine*, the advance of any other papal heresy; neither Pope nor Prelate can plant his feet where this is held forth and acted on; it meets him with confutation and expulsion at the door of the sanctuary; and, by referring to the sole priesthood of the divine Head of the Church—who brings into union with Himself all his people, and invites them "with boldness and confidence" to enter "the holiest of all," as "priests to God and their Father"—renders it impossible for any "clergyman" to usurp functions which his brethren, anointed with the Holy Ghost, may not perform with an authority and validity fully equal to any that he can claim.

But it is marvellous to see how this important truth of the Gospel has been neglected, and how Christians have, in almost all Protestant denominations, set themselves to the work of consolidating such a form of church government as should reduce

the priesthood of the whole body of believers to a naked theory, and make that a mere idea, abstracted from anything practical or tangible, which was intended to be a governing principle of the church upon earth.

Protestant Dissenters are of all others the most deeply interested in this question; both because they profess to have seceded to the utmost distance from Rome on purely Scriptural grounds, and also to have secured to themselves an ecclesiastical polity free from the evils incident to the systems which elsewhere prevail. Still their practice and their principles seem not to be consistent with each other. Their principles would lead to a plurality of ministers in each church; and we know not that such a plurality has ever been denied, in theory at least, by any respectable writer of their class. Nevertheless, the great body of Dissenters have, in practice, rejected the plurality of ministers, and have settled down into the one-man system, without the semblance of an argument in favour of such an arrangement.

But we take still higher ground. We plead not merely for the plurality of ministers, but for the full and free acknowledgment of the liberty of ministry to the whole Church of God; by which all may be placed in such a position "as that all may prophecy, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Cor. xiv. 31.) We plead for the abrogation of that law, or, which amounts to the same thing, of that *fixed custom* which commits to a *clerical* order, the whole duty of teaching and

ministering to the spiritual necessities of a congregation, and substitutes for the mutual exhortations of the church, the studied orations of professional theologians. We plead for the plenary recognition of the church-privileges of all the people of God; that they may, if called to the work and gifted for it, preach the word (Acts viii. 4); that a saving faith in Christ may be admitted as proof of that anointing, which institutes into the evangelical priesthood—for no one can say that Jesus is his Lord but by the Holy Spirit—and that the rule of the Apostle may be revived and acted on, "We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I have believed and therefore have I spoken, *we also believe and therefore speak.*" If the New Testament is to give us any light in these matters, this is plain, that the whole body of believers are, by it, regarded as exercising different ministrations: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; for to one, is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, the gift of healing by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will: for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ: for by one Spirit are we all baptized

into one body." (1 Cor. xii.) This important passage proves the whole argument,—that the Holy Spirit does baptize all believers into the body of Christ; making them priests in the sanctuary, by virtue of their union with Him; and that the Holy Spirit imparts to each the gifts of ministration, according to the will of God.

Again, it is written, "Every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation: let all things be done unto edifying, 1 Cor. xiv. 26." Now, whatever may be said of the miraculous gifts to which there is here an allusion, this is certain, that these passages contemplate the whole church in action, *in ministration;* and it would be presumptuous indeed to assert that the modern practice of restricting the ministry to one individual, however pious, learned, and respectable that individual may be, was known, or even thought of, in the æra when the New Testament was composed under divine influence. Incidental directions are continually occurring in the Scriptures, indicating that the work of the ministry (*i. e.* the edification of the church by exhortation, experience, doctrine, warning, counsel, faith, &c.) was with all believers: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. iv. 10); "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but *exhorting one another*." (Heb. x. 25.) But whilst passages like these are of frequent *occurrence,* there is no record of a fact, nor of any

thing like an incidental passing allusion, which can authorize even the most resolute partizan to assert that the order existing in these days existed also in the days of the apostles.

But here we encounter the usual arguments advanced for the power, authority, and pre-eminence of the clergyman, whether he be called Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, Minister, Pastor, or Superintendent. Now, as nearly all denominations have substantially, as it relates to the laity, the same cause to defend, it is no matter of surprise to find them all supporting their common theory by precisely the same arguments. There is indeed a wide difference in the *extent* of power which they claim for their clergy; and Rome and Oxford superinduce the aid of tradition to make their case still stronger; but all agree in quoting the same texts for the establishment of the clerical order. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. (Heb. xiii. 7)" "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief." (Heb. xiii. 17.) "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake" (1 Thess. v. 12, 13); and others of a similar import.

§ 3. *Why so little said of Church Government in the Scriptures.*

In contemplating this question of early church government, we are too apt to bring to it our own ideas and practices as a medium through which to view the subject. The object of most persons who engage in this inquiry, is to discover the exact degree of authority which the Elders, or Deacons, or Bishops of the church respectively possessed; to know and define, with precision, all the laws and customs of church polity; to restore the discipline and recover the canons of ecclesiastical regimen. Some writers will tell us that there was only one Bishop, and that he ruled the Priests; others, that there were no Priests, but many Elders, who were the same as Bishops; others, that there was one Bishop, above the rest, in every church; others, that the brethren might elect, or might not elect, to clerical offices; that the Deacons had this or that office, or this or that duty; and divers other points of that sort, which have been investigated with laborious research, and sustained with no little animosity in ecclesiastical controversies. But how comes it, if this indeed were the real matter of inquiry, that it is left undefined, uncertain, intangible, in Scripture; that church government is nowhere clearly described; that we are constrained to make our discoveries as well as we can, by the very unsatisfactory help of passing allusions or incidental remarks; and that that *which seems to be the* very soul of modern division,

and the life of controversy, and the strength of all sects, should have no definite shape in the canon of the New Testament?

The church government of the Mosaic Law is clear beyond dispute. There are, in the Law, not merely a few detached and questionable allusions, but whole chapters and books expressly on the subject: but in the Gospel, which is a more glorious ministration, which is a better, a clearer, a more life-giving system, the whole question of church government is never once directly handled! How shall we account for this? Simply by this explanation; that our Lord Jesus Christ is Himself the Head of the church, and that He raises up whom He will by the gift of the Holy Spirit, to edify the church according to his own purpose; that He never designed that it should be governed by a code of human laws and a book of canons, but that He did intend, and will effect that which He intended, to rule by his Spirit the church which He purchased with his own blood.

§ 4. *The Church Fruits of the Holy Spirit.*

Where the Holy Spirit is imparted, there will be seen the fruits of it, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" and, with such fruits as these, there will be no lack of church order. There will be Elders and Teachers; yea, there will be *Episcopoi* or Overseers of the flock; but their power will be that of love; they will, with the mitre of meekness, and the pastoral staff of humbleness of mind, with

the knowledge of the deep things of God, and, with the strength of prayer, seek to lead the flock to still waters and green pastures, and to keep them close under the eye of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. They will sit enthroned in the affections of their faithful brethren: and, amidst the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people, they will rule with priestly sway. Who can doubt it? Who does not wish that so it should be? Dare we not trust the promise of the exalted Head of the church? Are we unable to believe that He will magnify his word above all his name, and that He will, according to his word, be with his people to the end of the world? And are we at all doubtful that, if we come together with one mind and with one spirit, having no other desire than to live and die for the glory of Him who died for us, that He will not only raise up Pastors to take care of us from amongst our number; but will supply all other gifts needed for the different branches of edification and ministration?

That is very simple in itself which to many persons is a problem of inextricable difficulty. The Head of the Church will, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, raise up spiritual men into those offices which are for edification. Wherever there are gifts of preaching or teaching in the brethren, there they will, by that same grace by which faith was first imparted, be ultimately made manifest. Every man will stand in his proper position: each will fall into the ranks of the church according to the station for which he is adapted. The grave, the pru-

dent, the watchful, perceptive character will take his natural place for government; the brother, who has a gift of utterance, and who is well instructed in the Scriptures, will become a preacher or teacher; some, by general superiority of understanding, will precede others; and some, by faith and patience, and others by the gift of prayer, will be in that place of trust in the church which is evidently theirs, without any ceremony of election, or imposition of hands. The true authority is that of the message delivered and the character of him who delivers it. There is one Spirit which anoints them all for the priesthood, and sanctifies their faculties and calls them forth according to their adaptation, for the edification of the church. Caius may have many qualifications for government or for teaching, either conjointly or distinctly, which Lucius has not; whilst Lucius, a very dear brother, will take some other station, and be exceedingly valued by the church in his proper capacity. And thus it will come to pass, that, in the kingdom of love, Caius will be an overseer (*episcopos*), and he will take the oversight of the brethren by ruling in their affections.

§ 5. *What kind of Government is recognized in the Acts and the Epistles.*

To us, it is obvious that both the Acts and the Epistles were written with a view to church government such as this;—a church government, not with any fixed laws or defined polity, but avowedly under the direction of the Holy Spirit, ruling by the

principle of love; which, if it were understood and felt, would effectually settle all disputes about ecclesiastical regime, and show the utter emptiness of all those interminable questions concerning the ministerial office, which have indeed filled many books, but have not advanced the settlement of the question one degree further than it was in the days of Luther and Calvin.

§ 6. *Where we are to look for the Law of Church Government.*

The law of church-government is to be found in the general principles prescribed for the regulation of Christian conduct, and not in any canons or enactments of discipline. In texts like these we are to discover it: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit; let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." (Gal. v. 25.) "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ: for if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself; but let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; for every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Gal. vi. 2-6.) "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor." (Eph. v. 2.) "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to

the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; *submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*" (Eph. v. 19-21.) "The Elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an Elder." "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being Lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; *yea, all of you be subject one to another*, and be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. v. 1-5.) "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye; and, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness: and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." (Col. iii. 12-15.) "I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." (Rom. xv. 14.) "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore

receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." (Rom. xv. 5-7.)

§ 7. *The doctrine of a Christian Priesthood apart from the general body of Believers receives no countenance from the earliest History of Christianity.*

On this head we make no pretensions to dive deep into the depths of patristic lore. Indeed, we place very little stress on the historical argument as compared with the Scriptural. It is of small moment to us what the most ancient Fathers have taught on a question that is finally to be settled solely on the authority of Holy Writ. If they are to be summoned into court, it is simply that they may give testimony to matters of fact, and not to take the judges' seat and lay down the law for the church. That we have to seek in the archives of Inspiration, and nowhere else. At the same time, if the collateral records of the purest ages of Christianity go to confirm the results of previous enquiry conducted wholly on other grounds, nothing forbids our availing ourselves of this fact. Happily there is ample evidence that, though the apostolic polity was very early departed from, and the foundations of the hierarchy thoroughly laid, yet in the really primo-primitive days of the church the order for which we plead was the one that actually prevailed. The profound and clear-sighted Neander, the honest Mosheim, the exact Gieseler, are accounted reliable authorities in

this department, and they all concur in substantially the same view of the non-distinction of the clerical and the laical classes in the commencement of the church's career. The following extracts, samples of very many others which might be adduced, will convince the reader that, in the averment now made, we do not "speak without book."

"What Moses expressed as a wish, that the Spirit of God might rest upon all, and all might be prophets, is a prediction of that which was to be realized through Christ. By Him was instituted an economy distinguished from the constitution of all previously existing religious societies. There could be no longer a priestly or prophetic office, constituted to serve as a medium for the propagation and development of the Kingdom of God, on which office the religious consciousness of the community was to be dependent. Such a class of priests as existed in the previous systems of religion, empowered to guide other men, who remained, as it were, in a state of religious pupilage, having the *exclusive* care of providing for their religious wants, and serving as mediators, by whom all other men must be placed in connection with God and divine things,—such a priestly caste could find no place within Christianity. . . . . When the apostles applied the Old Testament idea of the priesthood, this was done invariably for the simple purpose of showing that no such visible particular priesthood could find place in the new community; that since free access to God and to heaven had been, once for all, open to believers by one High Priest, even Christ, they had, by virtue of their union to Him, become themselves a spiritual people, consecrated to God; their calling being none other than to dedicate their entire life to God as a thank-offering for the grace of redemption, to publish abroad the power and grace of Him who had called them out of the kingdom of darkness into his marvellous light, to make their life one continual priesthood. . . . . Each society was a whole composed of equal members, all the members *being but* organs of the community, as this was the body

quickened by the Spirit of Christ. All those members, organs of the whole and of the one Spirit that gave it life, were to co-operate each in his appropriate place, for the common end: and some of the members acted in this organization of parts as the pre-eminently guiding ones. But it could hardly work itself out in a natural way from the essence of the Christian life and of Christian fellowship, that *this guidance should be placed in the hands of only one individual. The monarchical form of government was not suited to the Christian community of Spirit.* The preponderance of one individual at the head of the whole might too easily operate as a cheque on the free development of the life of the church, and the free co-operation of the different organs, in whom the consciousness of mutual independence must ever be kept alive. The individual on whom every thing depended, might acquire too great an importance for the whole, and so become a centre round which all would gather, so as to obscure the sense of their common relation to *that only One*, who should be the centre for all."—*Neander's Ch. Hist.*, p. 179—183. *Torrey's Trans.*

"*All Christians*, originally, had the right of pouring out their hearts before the brethren, and of speaking for their edification in the public assemblies."—*Id.* Vol. I., p. 186.

"The duty of teaching, as an office, was by no means incumbent on the elders, although the apostle wishes that they should be *apt to teach.* The capacity for instructing and edifying in the assemblies was rather considered as a free gift of the Spirit, which manifested itself in many Christians, though in different modes. *Still less was a distinct priestly order known at this time; for the whole society of Christians formed a royal priesthood, God's peculiar people.*" *Giesseler, Ecc. Hist.*, ch. ii. § 30. p. 90. *Edin. Ed.*

"The authority of the church constituted the difference between the (clerical) order and the people. (Differentiam inter ordinem et plebem constituit ecclesiæ auctoritas.") *Ambrosiaster (Hilary* the Deacon), about A.D. 300, thus

speaks in his *Comment ad Ephes*:—"At first all taught and all baptized on whatever days or whatever times it might be convenient. . . . . As then the people grew and were multiplied it was a privilege conceded to all at the outset to evangelize, to baptize, and to expound the Scriptures in the church. But as places became filled with churches, conventicles were established and directors appointed, and other offices were created in the churches, so that no one of the number who was not ordained dared to take upon him an office which was not thus entrusted or conceded to him. The consequence was, that the church began to be governed by entirely a different order and providence, because if all were to be viewed as competent to the same function, it would of course be esteemed irrational, vulgar, and vile. Hence it has happened that now neither do deacons preach among the people, nor do clerics or lais baptize, nor are believers baptized on any and every day, unless it be the sick."—*Gieseler*, Vol. I. p. 91.

The grand question is the true sense of the Word of God, and yet we are not indifferent to the suffrages of great and good men. Brown, the earliest of the English Independents (from whom they were originally called *Brownists*) held the liberty of ministry, the equality of Christian brethren, the Spirit's teaching and competency (and not man's appointment or ordination), as the proper and only warrant for ministry in the present dispensation. Milton also maintains entirely the spiritual priesthood of all true believers, and utterly repudiates the idea of any *order* of men whatever be their name, being allowed to come in as *priests*, between God and his people, as the medium of intercourse, and the link of their connection with heaven; maintaining, what *the New Testament* so emphatically enforces, the

personal responsibility of every individual believer to God, and the impossibility of transacting, by proxy, those matters which relate to God and the soul, and can only be carried on by the aid of the Spirit, through the mediation of Jesus at the right hand of God. So far Milton's principles accord with the principles of the New Testament: and many of his pungent remarks in the tractate entitled "The Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church," deserve the grave and practical attention of the pastors and people of all sections of the professing church. We quote a brief passage from the close of it, commending the perusal of the whole to those who would see a clear and forcible exposition of the mischief which has been wrought in the church, by the exhibition of *lures* of any kind for inducing men to take upon themselves a work which they should undertake "not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind:"

"Heretofore, in the first evangelic times (and it were happy for Christendom were it so again), ministers of the gospel were by nothing else distinguished from other Christians but by their spiritual knowledge and sanctity of life, for which the Church elected them to be her teachers and overseers, though not thereby to separate them from *whatever calling* she then found them following besides; as the example of St. Paul declares, and the first times of Christianity. When once they affected to be called a *clergy*, and became, as it were, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babbling schools, and fed at the public cost, good for nothing else but what was good for nothing, they soon grew idle; that idleness, *with fulness of bread*, begat pride and perpetual contention

with their feeders, the despised laity, through all ages ever since, to the perverting of religion and the disturbance of all Christendom;"—of which "Christendom might soon rid herself and be happy, if Christians would but know their own dignity, their liberty, their adoption, and, let it not be wondered if I say, *their spiritual priesthood;* whereby they have all equally access to any ministerial function, whenever called by their own abilities and the Church, though they never came near commencement or university. But while Protestants, to avoid the due labor of understanding their own religion, are content to lodge it in the breast, or rather in the books of a clergyman, and to take it thence by scraps and mammocks, as he dispenses it in his Sunday's dole, they will be always learning, and never knowing; always infants; always his vassals, as lay Papists are to their priests; or at odds with him, as reformed principles give them some light to be not wholly conformable."

CHAPTER II.

The Apostolate.

§ 1. *Position assumed.*

"Church Government," says Prof. Schaaff, in his History of the Apostolic Church, "has its foundation in the Christian Ministry, which is originally identical with the Apostolate and contains the germs of all other church offices." Such, briefly stated, is the theory which constitutes the stronghold of the advocates of a priestly and clerical caste. It supposes that our Lord, in giving his last commandment to the disciples to go forth and proselyte all nations, gave it to them as a kind of corporation, or apostolic college, set apart under a special ecclesiastical organization, instead of giving it to them merely as individuals. Nearly all theologians have interpreted our Saviour's words in the former sense, implying a special commission to the apostles as an ecclesiastical corporation, and authorising them, as such, henceforth to preside over the whole body of believers; having power, in virtue of that position, to expound the doctrines of the Christian faith, to administer the sacraments, and especially to ordain

other persons to the performance of the same functions; thus perpetuating the clerical order as long as the church should endure on earth.

§ 2. *Position denied.*

The above statement brings the great question before us. Is it an undoubted fact that Christ did constitute the apostles an ecclesiastical corporation? The determination of this question involves the most serious consequences, since the clergy rest their claims, as a body of men consecrated by divine appointment to perform certain functions, on the assumption that the apostles themselves were a corporation; for unless they were so constituted they could not confer corporate powers upon those who succeeded them in point of time. Every important passage that is quoted from the New Testament, as implying commission, authority, or power to the clergy or ministers of the gospel, consists of words addressed expressly to the apostles. But no one has a right to apply to the clergy at large words spoken by Christ specially to his apostles, unless he can also show that the apostles were a corporation, and that as such they communicated the powers or authority which they themselves had received. Were they such a body? Did they communicate such a power? That twelve apostles were, in a special manner, individually commissioned to COMMENCE the work of proselyting mankind, is evident from the New Testament his-

tory; but that they were appointed to this work as an apostolic corporation, with powers to perpetuate this corporate authority by ordination, is a doctrine for which we find no adequate evidence in the Scripture.

In the first place, we have sought in vain for any passage in the New Testament that either speaks of, or implies, any such corporate action of the apostles as a distinct body. There is no plan for the organizations of such a collegiate body laid down in the apostolic writings, nor rules given by which it should be regulated. In warning the disciples against false prophets who would in time appear among them, our Lord gave them no other instruction by which to determine the character of these false teachers than that of judging them "according to *their fruits*." The theory of the appointment of such an apostolic college empowered to teach or govern with a special authority is also at variance with what the Lord says to his disciples, Matt. xxiii. 7—10, "Be ye not called Rabbi, *for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren*. And call no man *your father* upon the earth, for one is your father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called *masters*, for one is your master even Christ." Is it possible for words to bear a more direct testimony against a body of teachers so constituted than the circumstance, that the very words which imply the necessary superiority of such teachers are positively forbidden to be used?

Secondly. That there could have been no organi-

zation of the apostles, as a corporation, is evident from the statement made by Paul, who expressly tells us (Gal. i. 15, &c.) that, after his miraculous call to the apostleship, he held no conference whatever with those who were apostles before him, but went into Arabia in the work of the ministry; and not until three years after did he go up to Jerusalem, where he conferred only with Peter, and merely mentions having seen James of all the other apostles.

Thirdly. Neither did the other apostles know, during these three years, that Christ had appointed Paul to be an apostle with them; for when he first went up to Jerusalem (Acts ix. 26, 27) and "assayed to join himself with the disciples," they were all afraid of him, not believing him to be even a convert to Christianity, till Barnabas cleared up the matter. It seems incredible, then, that the apostles should have been a corporation when, for three years, they did not even know so eminent a member of their own body.

Fourthly. It is to be observed that Paul, in the greater number of his epistles, associates with himself in the address, Timothy, Sylvanus, or Sosthenes, who were his ordinary attendants on his missionary excursions. In other epistles he writes in his own name, and never uses any expression implying the concurrent authority of an apostolic body. It is the same with Peter, James, and John; they each write as individuals only. These facts are inconsistent with the hypothesis that the

apostles constituted a corporation, which was to be the fountain-head of ministerial authority.

The popular theory, therefore, that the ministerial function centered in, and originated with, what is termed the "apostolic college," viewed as a divine corporation, is, we think, totally irreconcilable with the statements made above. Nor does the filling up of the vacancy occasioned by the defection of Judas in the election of Matthias, as related Acts i. 15—26, invalidate in our minds this conclusion. The election does not appear to have been made by the apostles exclusively, but by the whole body of the disciples; and moreover it must be borne in mind that Christ Himself selected Paul for the vacant apostleship by a direct and supernatural appointment. The description (in Rev. xxi. 14) of the city of the celestial Jerusalem states that its foundations bore the names of "the *twelve apostles* of the Lamb." If Paul was included in this enumeration, then certainly Matthias was not, for then there would have been *thirteen apostles*, and if Matthias was included, then by the same reason Paul was not. The same remark is applicable to what is said by our Lord respecting the twelve apostles sitting upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

From the various considerations now adduced we deem the conclusion justified, that Christ called the apostles as individuals, and commissioned them to act in this capacity, and in this only. As such they went forth into the world, as it were upon so

many different missionary enterprizes, wherein each acted in accordance with his own views of religious duty, and not according to any enactments of an apostolical conclave. Consequently the theory of a permanent or perpetuated body of clergy originating from this source has, in our opinion, no foundation.

CHAPTER III.

MINISTRY.

§ 1. *Prevailing Notions.*

THE setting aside of any other *priesthood* in the Christian church than that of our Lord Himself still leaves the institution of a *ministry* untouched, and our inquiry now concerns that subject. What then is the general and popular idea of "ministry," and what is the divine teaching concerning it? With the multitude it is a wide undefined term, meaning an office equally undefined, held by one who is termed a priest, clergyman, minister, or preacher. With the uninstructed, "priesthood" and "ministry" are the same thing. Whoever will take the trouble to institute the inquiry, will find that the popular idea of "ministry" is like the popular idea of "church"—all dimness and confusion. A notion prevails that whatever is said about priests and levites in the Old Testament, and about bishops and ministers in the New, is to be applied to the Christian ministry,—that a minister is a priest, and a priest a minister; that the person holding this office is, in some way, to be ordained to it by other priests or ministers; that by virtue of his office he

is to preach and pray for the people, to visit the poor and the sick, to look after the salvation of men's souls, and more or less to *secure* it; that he is to be more pious than "the laity;" to wear official apparel; to be called "Reverend;" and generally to take the management of everything that belongs to "religion."

This is, with very little variation, the popular idea of "ministry," among all bodies of Christians; and it obviously is not the interest of the clerical department, in any sect, to clear up the popular mistakes on a subject which, if rightly understood, might tend to subvert all established arrangements, and to restore God's order over the ruins of the order of man.

§ 2. *The true Idea of Ministry as set forth in the Scriptures.*

The first and most obvious duty attached to a ministry by all parties is, of course, *official teaching;* except, indeed, in the Roman Catholic persuasion, where performing the sacrifice of the mass, and administering "the sacraments," take precedence of preaching and teaching; but now we are writing of Protestants, and amongst them—in all their denominations—teaching and preaching constitute, of necessity, a large portion of the ministerial functions. Let us now see what the New Testament says of these functions, their origin, and the persons to whom they are assigned. We find all this stated in 1 Cor. xii. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant . . . . Now

there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations (or services), but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

This statement is very clear: we are here very plainly informed that the Holy Spirit bestows various gifts on the members of the church; that the donation is not to a privileged class, separated from their brethren, nor according to man's appointment or election, but that the selection is made out of the whole body, according to the unrestrained will of the sovereign Distributor. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to profit withal" (v. 7), and in consequence of this divine regulation, one man receives wisdom, another knowledge, another faith (v. 8, 9). There are, indeed, other gifts mentioned, but with them we are not now concerned, as the church confessedly does not now possess them; but wisdom, knowledge, and faith must, in degree at least, exist, otherwise there would be no ministry or teaching at all. "Now all

these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, *dividing to every man* severally as he will." (v. 11.)

If this be a true description of the church as it was at the first, then it clearly bears no resemblance to the arrangements prevailing at the present time, when the division of ministry is not by the will and appointment of the Spirit, but by the direction and choice of man. This is indeed so plain, that almost all commentators seem quietly to yield the point,—that the ministry in the Corinthian church was of an order now lost, and that all existing churches have adopted another system. They speak of the Corinthian order as a pattern known only in the Scriptures; it is, in fact, *terra incognita* to them, and so accustomed are they to the arrangements introduced by tradition, that the distribution of gifts by the Spirit to every man in the church, they regard as some strange phenomenon of the days of miracles. Amongst the various denominations we do indeed see quite another system. In the churches of Rome and England, the bishops appoint to the ministry; in the kirk of Scotland, the Presbytery is the fountain of clerical functions; amongst dissenters generally, the people, or the church as it is called, *elect* the minister, and other ministers ordain him after he has been elected; whilst amongst the Wesleyans, the Conference, or some power deputed by the Conference, selects and governs all the ministers and preachers. Now, it must be clear to every one, that neither bishops, popular elections, presbytery, nor conference, can supersede the functions of the Holy Spirit; and

beyond this one need not push the inquiry, in order to be satisfied that nearly all sects, from the stately church of England, down to the lowest denomination of dissent, are gone far astray from the order recorded in the New Testament. If the Scriptures, then, are to be our guide, we have already advanced far in the solution of the problem before us; and we have only to apply the statements in the New Testament to facts before our eyes, to assure us of the accuracy of our deductions. For instance, let us try the existing church of Rome, by Paul's description of what that church was in his day. Paul, in writing to the Romans, (chap. xii.) says, "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," having different gifts—some being evangelists, others pastors, teachers, rulers, or helps. But now all that can be said of the church of Rome is, that it is entirely clerical; that the Holy Spirit does not appoint to the ministry, and that every thing there is under the supreme control of the Pope. The church of Rome, therefore, has lost the order set forth in the Scriptures; and so it is with others also; for we do not find it written, "He gave some bishops to rule dioceses; or He gave rectors and curates for the care of parishes; or He gave ordained ministers," &c., but something very dissimilar in every respect. Protestants, therefore, as well as the church of Rome, have departed from the authority of Scripture in their arrangements in regard to ministry.

Again: supposing, for argument's sake, that *such a form* of the church did exist as has been

described in the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians—that there was no "ordained" ministry, no clerical or official appointments, no clergymen or "ministers" consecrated or chosen to act as functionaries for the people, but that all the people, without any recognition of *official* distinction, met as a gathering of believers, to receive any "diversity of gifts" which the Holy Spirit might dispense amongst them; that "wisdom" "knowledge," "faith," were exhibited here and there, without man's direction, and wholly independent of it; and that those so gathered had no idea of any other order; would not such a church resemble a body in active and vigorous life; every limb, every member, contributing, in proper proportion, to the life and activity of the whole body? Now this is exactly the similitude selected by the apostle Paul, to describe the church of the Corinthians. "The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. *And if they were all one member*, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head

to the feet, I have no need of you. . . . . Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. xii.)

But let us ask, how can this portion of Scripture apply to the generality of Protestant denominations? In them there is no *body* at all, if we are to follow the apostle's illustration of the life and visibility of the church as manifested in the vitality of all the members, for the apostle plainly tells us, that "if they were all one member there would be no body;" and who is there that does not see in these words a condemnation of the clerical system, which presents the body in the form of one member only—THE MINISTER,—the ordained, official, and salaried minister, who, whether he be appointed to his office by a prelate or popular election, supersedes all other spiritual gifts in the church? In such a system as this, the body is dead, all the members are inanimate, the "honorable" or "feeble" are alike useless, and one individual is eye, mouth, ear, hand, and foot. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." This is the illustration of the apostle; whereas, applying this illustration to the arrangements of the present day, we see that one member says, "I will be eye, hand, head, and foot: entrust all your functions to me, ye separate members, for I will be the life of the whole body." This is a figurative description of *the fact* presented to us by the ministry of *the one man system*, and in such a system the supre-

macy of the Holy Spirit cannot be owned, nor can His distribution of gifts "to every man according to his own will" have any place.

Paul says, "The body is not one member, but many" (ver. 14). Now, the various sects practically, though unintentionally, deny this; and they ought, in keeping with their practices, to read the text thus: "The body *is* one member, and *not* many." The apostle afterwards proceeds thus: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" &c. This is a full explanation of all he had previously urged. Every member has not all these gifts, but every one is in a condition to receive any which the Spirit may impart; some may have one gift, others more than one. Teaching, helping, governing, may be separated or united, just as the Lord chooses; but not one word of this could be understood, if we were to suppose that one or two individuals acted officially and permanently in lieu of the whole body of believers. Suppose, only for argument's sake, that there was a ministry in the apostle's days, such as we see in these times, then would it be impossible to comprehend Paul's meaning; but if on the other hand we dismiss the idea of a clerical order, and admit the fact that the whole body of believers waited for such ministry as the Holy Spirit might please to apportion to them, dividing

to every man severally as He chose, then we can understand all the argument of the apostle.

In the fourteenth chapter of the same epistle, Paul incidentally lets us know the result of the church-order as it existed in those days. (Ver. 23-31), "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, *every one of you* hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three and that by course; and let one interpret. . . . . Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. *For ye may all prophesy one by one*, that all may learn and all may be comforted." The meaning of this passage is evident: Paul supposes it to be possible that in the meetings of the churches *all* the believers might be so injudicious as to use the one gift which would be intelligible only to themselves, but wholly unintelligible to "the unlearned or unbelievers" (ver. 23). This possible mistake he corrects by recommending that only two or three should speak in an unknown tongue; but at the same time he mentions, with manifest appro-

bation, the possible fact of *all* prophesying, nay, he plainly says, that "all might prophesy one by one, that all might learn, and all be comforted;" and whilst he says this, he never alludes to the existence, in the Corinthian church, of official pastors, ordained ministers, or clergymen; his thoughts never go that way at all; he does not, as is the custom now, address his remarks as a matter of course to "the minister," meaning thereby either the parish priest or the popularly-elected preacher, but he directs his precepts to the whole Corinthian church, as the ministering body. He takes it for granted that gifts would be visible in *the body*—the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, faith, teaching, help, government, evangelizing, and the rest; and that the appointment to those gifts must be by the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit by which, as he tells us, in introducing the subject, every believer has been enabled to say that Jesus is the Lord. (1 Cor. xii. 3). And indeed it is well worthy of observation that Paul, in writing to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Thessalonians, Philippians, and Colossians, never directs his letters to "the minister;" he never even names such an individual; and this fact alone, if duly weighed, would go far to settle the question of an "ordained ministry," wherever there is a disposition implicitly to believe and obey the word of God.

Are we then to follow the Scriptures in these matters? Are we to test "churches" as they are called, by the precepts and arrangements which we find in the Scriptures? If so, let us see how, with

any intelligible meaning, the following words could now be addressed to the congregations assembled for worship whether in church or chapel:—"Brethren, when ye come together, *every one of you* hath a psalm, hath a doctrine," 1 Cor. xiv. 26: "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit. . . . . But all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing *to every man* severally as he will." 1 Cor. xii. "As *every man* hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if *any man* speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if *any man* minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

There are two other chapters in the New Testament in which the subject is fully set forth. To the Romans Paul writes, "For I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with

diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness" (xii). Here Paul enumerates some of the gifts:—prophesy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, showing mercy; now whatever may be our opinion about the precise character of some of these gifts, this is certain, that ministry, exhortation, teaching and ruling—four offices, which in these days are always assigned to one person, and which are always deemed to be the peculiar prerogatives or duties of "the minister"—are declared by Paul to be gifts "differing according to the grace that is given." Now his precepts and admonitions cannot, in the least, be understood, unless it be admitted that these offices are distributed among the members of the church, instead of being conferred on one individual only. His remarks are to this effect: "Do not any of you, in the church which is sojourning in Rome, be elated with your gifts; for if you have any gift, whether that of ministry, teaching, exhortation, prophesy, or power of government, understand that it is a donation of grace, a manifestation of the Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will. You are but members of one body; the members have each their proper office assigned to them, and when each member performs its functions, the whole body is in a state of harmonious and healthy vitality."

This being the same subject as that which Paul handles in his epistle to the Corinthians, it is interesting to notice that on both occasions he enforces his thoughts by similar illustrations,—the subject leading him, as it were of necessity, to refer to the

body and its members for an intelligible and convincing similitude. Again, in his epistle to the Ephesians, we find the same statements: "There is one body, and one Spirit . . . . . But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . . . And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . . and may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (iv. 4—16.)

In this portion then of the Scriptures we have again the same subject with the same illustrations—the Holy Spirit divides to all as He chooses—the church is in a capacity to receive any gifts—every believer may help in the service of the church. Moreover, it deserves particular attention that "the growing up into the perfect man," and "the increase of the body," is presumed by Paul to be both possible and probable *when God's order prevails.* He brings forward these things to show the end and object of such an arrangement; if, therefore, we

find professing Christians deliberately rejecting God's order, and setting up a ministry ordained of man instead, can we be surprised if there is not amongst them any visible "growing up into a perfect man," and that "the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," is a mystery with which they are practically unacquainted?

And now, let us compare this teaching of Scripture with the practices everywhere prevalent. In these days we hear clergymen asserting that they hold an office which makes them a class distinct from the body of believers; that to them, by their ordination, belongs the exclusive prerogative of evangelist, pastor, teacher, and ruler amongst "their people;" and that "the laity" cannot, without great irregularity, nay, not without sin, interfere in functions belonging exclusively to the clerical order. In church and chapel we hear this either openly asserted or tacitly implied, according to the degree of clerical feeling which prevails with those who hold ecclesiastical offices; but wherever we see a clerical order, do we not at the same time see a practical contradiction of the scriptural constitution of ministry? How can a ministry appointed by man, harmonize with a ministry distributed by the Spirit? How can an ordained clerical *caste* comport with the free exercise of gifts on the part of the whole body of believers? We can, therefore, come to no other conclusion than that "the churches" of our days do not represent the *divine* order in their ministerial arrangements. The origin and history of this great perversion we need not now examine,

of the fact of a perversion—of an apostacy—there can be no doubt at all in the minds of those who are guided in this inquiry by the Scriptures rather than by tradition.

A formidable array of Scripture authority has been produced to establish the truths for which we plead: but what is the usual reply to so much and to such clear evidence? Generally, an exclamation of amazement that we could have propounded anything so strange as that, in the New Testament, there is no such thing as human ordination to the ministry. It behoves us, therefore, to be still more explicit, that we may show both what Scripture does and does not teach on the subject—that we may prove our point both negatively and positively. Here, then, let it be remembered that we are not to be deceived by the use of words diverted from their proper meaning; for there *is* "ministry" in the New Testament, and abundantly set forth too there, far more abundantly than we are, for the most part, prepared to receive; but it has no reference to that kind of ministry which is handed down to us by tradition: it is therefore important again to describe the traditional, before we further exhibit the scriptural. The ministry of professing Christendom, at the present day implies a body of men set apart by a sacerdotal ceremony, and ordained into an office in which they have the exclusive right to preach, teach, feed, and tend the flock, as well as to "administer the sacraments." We now proceed to inquire, if the ministry of scripture answers to this representation of it.

§ 3. *Examination of Scripture Terms relative to Ministry.*

In the New Testament the Greek words translated "ministry," except when predicated of Christ himself, Rom. xv. 8, Matt. xx. 28, Heb. viii. 6, are used to denote *any service of believers to God and to his Church*, though in our English translation their meaning is occasionally weakened or perverted. The word "ministry" occurs in our New Testament eighteen times, in all which instances, except two, it is a translation of the Greek word *diakonia*. In the following passages *ministry* is given as the translation of *leitourgia*, otherwise rendered *service*:— "But now hath he obtained a more excellent *ministry (leitourgia)*, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant." (Heb. viii. 6.) 'Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the *ministry (leitourgia)*. (ix. 21.) These two instances are the only exceptions. There are, however, several instances in which *diakonia* is translated by some other word than "ministry;" and this fact may at once enable us to understand how much confusion of thought may be introduced by a capricious translation, made under the influence of preconceived opinions. But in order to present the whole subject in its clearest light, it will doubtless be expedient to bring before the reader the entire list of passages where the original terms for *to minister*, *ministry*, &c., occur in the New Testament. The actual usage will evince that nearly all the advan-

tage gained by the clerical theory is due to a subtle process of *technicalizing* terms which were intended to bear no other than their ordinary import. This process has been somewhat largely applied by ecclesiastical and other dignitaries in the interpretation of holy writ, but in no case perhaps more glaringly than in regard to the words which we are now about to consider.

§ 4. *diakonia.*

The word *diakonia* is found in the New Testament thirty four times. In sixteen cases it is translated "ministry"—in six, "ministration"—in four, "service"—in three, "ministering"—in two, "administrations"—in one, "office"—in one, "relief"—and in one, "to minister."

Luke x. 40. "But Martha was cumbered about much *serving (diakonia).*"

Acts i. 17. "Had obtained part of this *ministry (diakonia).*"

Acts i. 25. "That he may take part of this *ministry (diakonia).*"

Ministry here is *service*, service to God and his church; not a clerical or episcopal office, as it is to be feared the translators wished the readers to understand it, if we may judge by their unwarrantable use of the word "bishoprick" in the 20th verse of that chapter.

Acts vi. 1. "Were neglected in the daily *ministration (diakonia).*"

Acts vi. 4. "Will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the *ministry (diakonia)* of the Word."

In the general *service* to be rendered by all the members to the church, that of expounding and applying the Scriptures doubtless devolved more especially upon the apostles. So at the present day, those whose gifts qualify them for it would, in true gospel order, be called to the discharge of the same functions.

Acts xi. 29. "Then the disciples . . . . . determined to send *relief (diakonia)* unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea."

Acts xii. 25. "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their *ministry (diakonia)*," *i.e.*, had *administered the relief* spoken of in the preceding passage.

Acts xx. 24. "So that I might finish my course with joy, and the *ministry (diakonia)* which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

This was the special *service* to which Paul was called; and every man who has an experimental knowledge of the gospel, and is gifted for the work, is called also to "testify" of that gospel to his fellow-men; though the character of his *ministry* or *service* may not be the same with that of Paul.

Acts xxi. 19. "And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his *ministry (diakonia)*," *i.e.*, by his *instrumental service*.

Rom. xi. 13. "Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine *office (diakonia)*," *i.e.*, my service.

Rom. xii. 7. "Or *ministry (diakonia)*, let us wait on our *ministering (diakonia)*; or he that teacheth, on teaching.

Whatever is here implied by *ministry* or *ministering*, it is evidently something not precisely identical

with *teaching*, as the two are clearly distinguished. With the popular ideas of the *ministry*, as now existing, this distinction would not have been made.

Rom. xv. 31. "That my *service (diakonia)* which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;" *i.e.*, the *contribution* of which I am made the bearer.

1 Cor. xii. 5. "And there are differences of *administrations (diakonion)*, but the same Lord."

1 Cor. xvi. 15. "And that they have addicted themselves to the *ministry (diakonia)* of the saints;" *i.e.*, to the *service* of the saints.

2 Cor. iii. 7. "If the *ministration (diakonia)* of death, written," &c.

2 Cor. iii. 8. "How shall not the *ministration (diakonia)* of the Spirit be rather glorious?"

2 Cor. iii. 9. "For if the *ministration (diakonia)* of condemnation be glory, much more doth the *ministration (diakonia)* of righteousness exceed in glory."

Ministration or *ministry* as used in this connection seems to be equivalent to *economy* or *dispensation*.

2 Cor. iv. 1. "Therefore seeing we have this *ministry (diakonia)*, as we have received mercy, we faint not;" *i.e.*, seeing we are called to act in connection with the *general service* before spoken of.

2 Cor. v. 18. "And hath given to us the *ministry (diakonia)* of reconciliation."

2 Cor. vi. 3. "Giving no offence in anything, that the *ministry (diakonia)* be not blamed."

2 Cor. viii. 4. "Praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the *ministering (diakonia)* to the saints;" *i.e.*, affording them relief.

2 Cor. ix. 1. "Touching the *ministering (diakonia)* to the *saints;*" *i.e.*, as above, ministering to their temporal wants.

2 Cor. ix. 12. "For the *administration of this service (diakonia tes leitourgias tautes)* not only supplieth the want of the saints," &c.

2 Cor. ix. 13. "While by the experiment of this *ministration (diakonia)* they glorify God."

2 Cor. xi. 8. "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them *to do you service (diakonia)*."

Eph. iv. 11, 12. "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry *(diakonia)*, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Prior to a close inspection of this passage in the original we were not aware how far short the present rendering comes of exhibiting the true sense of the sacred writer. That rendering, it will be observed, presents three distinct clauses, divided by commas, embracing what the English reader would take to be three separate, but closely related objects to be accomplished by the divine appointment of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" in the church—the first, "the perfecting of the saints,"—the second, "the work of the ministry," —the third, "the edifying of the body of Christ." It may, however, be fairly doubted whether this truly expresses the meaning of the original. There is, as is well known, no apostolic authority for the *punctuation* of the text. Moreover, the preposition "for" before "perfecting" is not the same word as that before "work of the ministry," or that before "edifying of the body." In the one case it is *pros*, and in the other *eis*. In view then of the phrasing of the original, no other rendering appears to be

legitimate than the following, or one equivalent to it: "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ." The original is simply *diakonias, of ministry*, without the article, and not *of the ministry*, with the article. What more obvious than that the ministry here spoken of is a ministry pertaining to *all* the saints, and not the technical or clerical ministry which has been so generally understood by it? Christ gave these various offices to the church for the express purpose of better qualifying all his people to perform that *service* or *ministry* which should help to build up the whole body into the fulness and completeness of the divine life.

Col. iv. 17. "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the *ministry (diakonia)* which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

Had *diakonia* been here translated "service" it would have far more faithfully expressed the meaning of the original. Archippus had been known as one *in service* to the Lord and to his people; what that service was, we cannot now say, but it does not at all appear that it was preaching the Gospel, or the exercise of the pastoral office. Archippus might have had no gift for teaching or preaching; he might have had no gift for government. What his gift was it is impossible for us now to determine; only this is apparent, that the service for which he was known, he had "received in the Lord;" but such is the force of the *customary notions*, that his "ministry" is generally

supposed to have been an official pastorate; so that ministers of the establishment claim Archippus as one of their clergy, while others, with equal confidence, tell us that he was a minister of a congregational church.

1 Tim. i. 12. "For that he counted me faithful, putting me into the *ministry (eis diakonian);*" lit. *appointing me to service,* the article being wanting in the original.

2 Tim. iv. 5. "Make full proof of thy *ministry (diakonia);* lit. *fulfil thy service.*

By "ministry" here is to be understood not the clerical function, but the whole of Timothy's service. What sort of service that is, we may learn by reference to the words of Paul respecting himself: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." This is the *diakonia* which is so often in his thoughts and so much upon his pen. Any service and all service is "ministry" in the New Testament diction.

2 Tim. iv. 11. "Take Mark and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the *ministry (eis diakonian);*" lit. he is profitable to me *unto service, i.e.,* to serving or ministering to my necessities.

Heb. i. 14. "Are they not all ministering *(leitourgica)* spirits sent forth to *minister (eis diakonian)* for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" lit. sent forth *for service.*

Rev. ii. 19. "I know thy works, and charity, and *service (diakonia).*"

§ 5. *diakoneo.*

The verb *diakoneo, to serve, to minister,* occurs thirty-six times, in twenty-two of which it is rendered by *minister,* in ten by serve, in two by

administer, and in two by *using the office of a deacon.*

Matt. iv. 11. "Angels came and *ministered unto* (*diekonoun*) *him.*"

Matt. viii. 15. "She arose and *ministered unto* (*diekonei*) them."

Matt. xx. 28. "Even as the Son of Man came not to *be ministered unto* (*diakonethenai*) but *to minister* (*diakonesai*) and to give his life," &c. So also Mark x. 45.

Matt. xxv. 44. "When saw we thee . . . . . in prison and did not *minister unto* (*diekonesamen*) thee?"

Matt. xxvii. 55. "And many women were there . . . . . which followed Jesus from Galilee, *ministering unto* (*diakonousai*) him."

Mark i. 13. "And the angels *ministered unto* (*diekonoun*) him."

Mark. i. 31. "The fever left her and she *ministered unto* (*diekonei*) them." Luke iv. 39.

Mark xv. 41. "Who also . . . . . followed him and *ministered unto* (*diekonoun*) him."

Luke viii. 3. "And many others which *ministered unto* (*diekonoun*) him of their substance."

Luke x. 40. "My sister hath left me *to serve* (*diakonein*) alone."

Luke xii. 37. "And will come forth and *serve* (*diakonesei*) them."

Luke xvii. 8. "Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and *serve* (*diakonei*) me."

Luke xxii. 26. "He that is chief, as he that *doth serve* (*diakonon*)."

Luke xxii. 27. "Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that *serveth* (*diakonon*)."

Luke xxii. 27. "I am among you as he *that serveth* (*diakonon*)."

John xii. 2. "There they made him a supper, and Martha *served* (*diekonei*)."

John xii. 26. "If any man *serve (diakone)* me, let him follow me."

John xii. 26. "If any man *serve (diakone)* me, him will my Father honor."

Acts vi. 2. "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and *serve (diakonein)* tables."

Acts xix. 22. "Two of them that *ministered unto (diekonoun)* him."

Rom. xv. 25. "But now I go unto Jerusalem *to minister (diakonon)* unto the saints."

2 Cor. iii. 3. "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, *ministered (diakonetheisa)* by us."

2 Cor. viii. 19. "To travel with us with this grace, *which is administered (diakonoumena)* by us to the glory of the same Lord."

2 Cor. viii. 20. "*Which is administered (diakonoumena)* by us."

1 Tim. iii. 10. "Let these also first be proved; then *let them use the office of a deacon (diakoneitosan)*, being found blameless."

1 Tim. iii. 13 "For they that have *used the office of a deacon (diakonesantes)*, well," &c.

In the two preceding texts a new phase is given to the rendering of the original word; our translators having turned the term into the "exercise of the deacons' office," which they could readily do where it would especially suit their purpose. But upon the *deaconship* we shall dwell more at length in a subsequent page.

2 Tim. i. 18. "And in how many things he *ministered unto (diekonesen)* me at Ephesus."

Phil. 13. "That in thy stead he *might have ministered unto me (diakone)* in the bonds of the Gospel."

Heb. vi. 10. "In that ye *have ministered to (diakonsantes)* the saints and do *minister (diakonountes)*."

1 Pet. i. 12. "But unto us they *did minister* (*diekonoun*) the things which are now reported." &c.

1 Pet. iv. 10. "Even so *minister (diakonountes)* the same one to another;" *i.e.* be mutually *serviceable* one to another.

1 Pet. iv. 11. "If any man *minister (diakonei)* let him do it." &c.

§ 6. *diakonos.*

This word occurs in the New Testament thirty times. In twenty it is translated "ministers," in seven, "servants," and in three, "deacons."

Matt. xx. 26. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your *minister (diakonos)*."

Matt. xxii. 13. "Then said the king to the *servants (diakonois)*, Bind him hand and foot."

Matt. xxiii. 11. "He that is greatest among you shall be your *servant (diakonos)*."

Mark ix. 35. "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and *servant (diakonos)*, of all."

Mark x. 43. "Shall be your minister *(diakonos.)*"

John ii. 5. "His mother saith unto the *servants (diakonois)*."

John ii. 9. "But the *servants (diakonoi)* which drew the water knew."

John xii. 26. "Where I am, there shall also my *servant (diakonos)* be."

Rom. xiii. 4. "For he is the *minister (diakonos)* of God to thee for good." This is spoken of the civil magistrate.

Rom. xiii. 4. "For he is the *minister (diakonos)* of God, a revenger," &c.

Rom. xv. 8. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a *minister (diakonos)* of the circumcision for the truth of God."

Rom. xvi. 1. "I commend unto you Phebe our sister which, is a *servant (diokonos)* of the church which is at Cenchrea."

1 Cor. iii. 5. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but *ministers (diakonoi)* by whom ye believed?"

2 Cor. iii. 6. "Who hath also made us able *ministers (diakonous) of the* New Testament."

2 Cor. vi. 4. "But in all things approving ourselves the *ministers (diakonoi)* of God;" *i.e.*, as *servants*.

2 Cor. xi. 15. "It is no great thing if his *ministers (diakonoi)* also be transformed as the *ministers* of righteousness;" *i.e.*, his *servants*.

2 Cor. xi. 23. "Are they *ministers (diakonoi)* of Christ? . . . . . I am more."

Gal. ii. 17. "Is therefore Christ the *minister (diakonos)* of sin?"

Eph. iii. 7. "Whereof I was made a *minister (diakonos)* according to the gift," &c.

Eph. vi. 21. "But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful *minister (diakonos)* in the Lord shall make known."

Phil. i. 1. "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and *deacons (diakonois)*."

Col. i. 7. "As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant who is for you a faithful *minister (diakonos)* of Christ." Com. ch. iv. 7.

Col. i. 23. "Whereof I Paul am made a *minister (diakonos)*." So also v. 25.

1 Thes. iii. 2. "And sent Timotheus, our brother and *minister (diakonos)* of God."

1 Tim. iii. 8. "Likewise must the *deacons (diakonous)* be grave." &c.

1 Tim. iii. 12. "Let the *deacons (diakonoi)* be the husbands of one wife."

1 Tim. iv. 6. "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good *minister (diakonos)* of Jesus Christ."

These are very important instances of the usage of a word which in fact is descriptive of all Christ's deacons, ministers, or servants. Any one that serves Christ is his *diakonos*. "I commend unto you Phebe, our sister, which is a *diakonos* of the church at Cenchrea, (Rom. xvi. 1)." Even Bloomfield, who seldom

fails, wherever an opportunity occurs, to give a high church interpretation, says upon Rom. xii. 6, "The words *diakonos*, *diakonein*, and *diakonia*, though general terms and used of the apostles themselves, are often, in the New Testament, used of some certain *specific* office undertaken in the cause of the Christian church and exercised by those Christians who did not so much employ themselves in *explaining the doctrines* of the Gospel, as in *managing the external and temporal* affairs of the church and of individuals." This is a creditable concession for a member of that church which so emphatically teaches that *deacon* (*diakonos*) is the title of one of the orders of the teaching priesthood. It is one of the accumulated and irresistible testimonies to the fact, that the general import of the term, in all its branches, is *service*—*service* of whatever kind—which is brought into requisition in building up the Lord's church on earth. But upon the usage of this term and on the office of *deacon* we shall have more to say shortly.

In view of the ample array of passages now adduced, is not the conclusion fair and unimpeachable, that "*minister*" *never, in one single instance in the New Testament, means a clerical functionary; that* "*ministry*" *has the meaning of service in every instance where it is expressive of the actions of Christians; and that it frequently refers to the service of all believers one to another?* This is our firm conviction, and consequently we hold that the entire clerical system which has so long obtained in the Christian church has been, as we have before re-

marked, the result of a process of *technicalizing* the import of certain terms which were designed to be taken in their more natural and ordinary sense. It is easy to see how the operation of certain principles of our fallen nature should have led to the conversion, for instance, of the original word for *servant* into that of *minister* as implying ecclesiastical rule, and of the simple word *overseer* into that of *bishop;* and so of a multitude of others, that have been made the groundwork of a pernicious system of hierarchy.

§ 7. *The Office of Deacon.*

But in order to make the general subject yet plainer we must clear up some mistakes that have accumulated around the word *diakonos*, which, in the English Bible, appears as "minister," "servant," or "deacon," as it suited the object of the translators to render it. Let it then be remembered that the translators had a double task to perform, not only to give an English version of the Scriptures, but so to accomplish their task as not to disturb the ecclesiastical order of their own communion. That this was the case we know by historical record; for King James expressly commanded them not to change "the old ecclesiastical words;" and in their preface attached to the larger Bibles, they thus express themselves: "We have avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words and betake themselves to others." The effect of this caution is most conspicuous in relation to the words "bishop,"

"overseer," "deacon," "minister," "church," &c., &c.; but at present we have only to investigate their mode of dealing with the words, ministry, minister, service, servant, deacon; a mode of dealing which, with them, was almost a necessity, since in the preface "to the form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating bishops, priests and deacons," published in the larger prayer-books, we find this to be the first sentence, "It is evident unto all men, *diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient authors*, that, from the apostles' time, there have been these *orders of ministers*, in Christ's church; bishops, priests, and deacons." Here is an appeal to Scripture, together with "ancient authors," in support of the three orders of the Established Church: we may, therefore, conjecture how the clerical translators would handle the text, when it presented difficulties in the way of their system.

Diakonos, a word employed thirty times in the the New Testament, has not, in a single instance in the original, the technical and official meaning of either a deacon or a minister. The *diakonos* of the New Testament, when used in reference to the Church of God, is a person who, in any way, is serving God. In two instances it is applied to express an ordinary domestic servant. "His mother said unto *the servants* ..... *the servants* which drew the water." (John ii. 5, 9.) And in Rom. xiii. 4, the ruler or magistrate is called "*a servant* (diakonos) of God."

The passages adduced will be sufficient to show that the *diakonos* of the Greek text is a word gene-

rally expressive of *service*, and that to translate it *deacon* or *minister* in one passage, whilst in another it is rendered *servant*, is not to represent the true meaning of the original, but rather the ecclesiastical prejudices of the translators. And in fact, the word 'deacon," as descriptive of a special office, though, making a conspicuous figure in the English Bible, has no existence in the original, as will clearly appear from what follows. The origin of the deacon's office is generally traced to the transaction recorded in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the whole church at Jerusalem, by the advice of the apostles, selected seven men "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" to superintend the service of the tables, and to silence the murmurings of some, who thought that "their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." The church chose seven holy men for this duty; and when they were chosen, the apostles prayed and laid their hands on them. But no mention is here made that these persons were called deacons; nor in any other place of the New Testament is this implied. It had reference to local and temporary circumstances, namely, the common table of the saints at Jerusalem; and as we read of no such peculiar circumstances in any of the other churches, so must it have ceased when the necessity ceased to which it owed its existence. This is discoverable by a close attention to the text, which, from the original, is to be thus read—"Look out among you seven men of honest report, whom we will appoint for this *necessity*." In the English Bible we read it "this busi-

ness;" but the word is *chreia*, which, though it occurs upwards of forty times in the New Testament, is, in every instance but this, uniformly rendered "need" or "necessity." Now the difference in the translation is important; as it stands, "over this business," it leaves a general impression that "the deacons" were appointed to take care of the poor in the church; but translate it correctly "for this necessity," and then it will appear that it was a peculiar exigency—that the service of the common table at Jerusalem at that time required special attention and care; and that, for that necessity, and in order to prevent a spirit of discontent arising amongst the multitude of believers, they thought it expedient to choose seven approved brethren, to whose wisdom and grace they might leave all the arrangement and ordering of a very onerous duty.

There are indeed, some who, perceiving that the seven were appointed for a special purpose, and that consequently their special duties must have ceased with the circumstances which called them forth, nevertheless contend that the general duty of distribution may have devolved on the Seven, and that we may *conjecture* that an office similiar to that of the Seven would be created elsewhere. But to this we reply, that "the general duty of distribution" was not considered the special province of the Seven, for in Acts xi. 29, 30, we are told that the disciples at Antioch, "every man according to his ability, determined to send relief *(or service, diakonian)* unto the brethren which

dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it *to the Elders* by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." . . . . "And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their *service (diakonian)*." (xii. 25.) Now the collection here made (and doubtless that also referrred to in Rom. xv. 26), was not sent to the Seven, as the general distributors or bursars-general of the church, but *to the elders;* and it is moreover apparent from Acts xv. 2, 22, 23, that the elders were distinct from the apostles; hence we conclude, that the general ministry of distribution fell rather within the province of the elders.

In what other place then in the New Testament shall we find "the deacon" and his "office?" In Paul's Epistle to Timothy, our translators have given it a being: "likewise must the deacons be grave;" "let the deacons be the husbands of one wife" (1 Tim. iii.); and still more conspicuously, "let these also first be proved; then *let them use the office of a deacon*, being found blameless." (v. 10.) But, as in the first instances, "the deacon" should be "the servant," or, if you will, "the minister," taking care that no *clerical* meaning is attached to the word; so in this instance "the office of a deacon" is wholly ideal: in the original it is, "let them *serve*, or *be in service*." Again, verse 13, instead of "They that have used *the office of a deacon* well purchase to themselves a good degree," it should read thus, "They that have *served well* secure to themselves a good step." So that the only passages in the New Testament where, in the autho-

rized version, we find "the office of a deacon," wholly fail to support it; and the term itself, when examined by the original, turns out to be the invention of the translators, introduced into the text to take the place of a word expressing quite another idea!

But this may be put still clearer, for a few verses further on the translators have again found the word *diakonos;* but there they give it another meaning. "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good *minister* of Jesus Christ." (iv. 6.) Why then is the word in this verse not translated "deacon," when it had twice before been so presented to us? Apparently for this reason, that as Timothy is, by the Episcopalians, pronounced to be "Bishop of Ephesus" (yea, by some declared to be "Primate of all Asia")—his prelatic titles would have disappeared if he had been called a "deacon" by the apostle Paul. We see then that *deacon* is an arbitrary word; that the original word means simply any servant of the Lord in the church; and that the translators introduce or keep back the official "deacon" as it happens to suit their purpose. If "they who serve well" (1 Tim. iii. 13), are "deacons," then assuredly was Timothy himself a deacon (iv. 16); but if he was not a deacon, but only a servant of the Lord in the church, then "they who served well" were not official deacons, but servants of the Lord in the church as was also Timothy. In 1 Thess. iii. 2, Timothy is again mentioned as *diakonos.*

After this, need we hesitate to pass judgment

on the mistakes that exist on this subject? In the ordination of deacons in the Church of England, the bishop is made to say, that "it appertaineth to the office of a deacon to assist the priest in divine service, specially when he ministereth the holy communion; to read the Scriptures and homilies in the church, to teach children the church catechism, to baptise infants, *in the absence of the priest*, to preach, if licensed so to do by the bishop, and to point out the poor and sick of the parish to the curate, in order that the curate may exhort his parishioners to relieve them!" And all this we are gravely told is the office of the deacon, as appointed by the apostles, and recorded in the sixth chapter of Acts!

The Non-Conformists too have gone astray in their endeavours to realize "the deacon's office." They are not indeed agreed amongst themselves whether "the deacon's office" is to be traced to the sixth chapter of Acts; but they pretty generally affirm that the care of the poor is the proper duty of this officer. "I affirm," says the author of the *Church Member's Guide*, "that the table of the poor is the deacon's appropriate and exclusive duty. Whatever is conjoined with this is *extra-diakonal* service, and vested in the individual merely for the sake of utility."—The same writer further says—"the deacons, from their being officers in the church, ... will be considered by every wise and prudent *minister* as his privy council in his spiritual government, and should always be ready

to afford him, in a modest, respectful, and unobtrusive manner, their advice."

This last sentence could scarcely be put into Scripture language; for in making the attempt we should thus read it: "The *diakonoi*, from their being officers in the church, ... will be considered by every wise and prudent *diakonos*, &c." Tradition has separated the deacon and the minister, but in the New Testament they are one and the same word; and indeed so fully does *diakonia* mean any service in the church, that, as used in the Scripture, it is a synonyme also for "the office of a bishop," as the English translators have fallaciously rendered. Compare Acts i. 17 with verse 20 of the same chapter.

By this examination of Scripture we are now coming to daylight where much darkness had been allowed to settle, and we are beginning to ascertain that "ministry" is all manner of service in the spiritual government of the church of God: that "ministers" and "deacons" are simply servants: and that any believer, man or woman, who serves the Lord and his people, is a deacon or a minister.

Paul was, in this sense, a deacon, minister, or servant (2 Cor. xi. 23; Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 23); and so also were Timothy, (1 Thess. iii. 2; 1 Tim. iv. 6); and Phebe (Rom. xvi. 1); and Apollos (1 Cor. iii. 5); and Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21); and all those who were in the service of the Lord in the church at Philippi (Phil. i. 1.) And indeed,

if we may imitate the translators of the English Bible, and coin the term "deacon's office" out of the verb *diakoneo*, then all believers that have received the gift are to exercise the deacon's office one to another, 1 Pet. iv. 10; and then also there are diversities of deacon's offices (1 Cor. xii. 5.)

There is in the Greek one word for "deacon," "minister," "servant," &c.; that word is *diakonos:* let, then, any one word that the enquirer may be pleased to select be taken as a translation of that word,—and let it be uniformly adhered to in every instance where the word *diakonos* appears in the original.

§ 8. *Ministry as implied in the term hupeeretees.*

"Ministry," however, makes its appearance in the English Bible through the medium of another word, which must not be overlooked. That word is *hupeeretees*, and in four instances it is so translated as to carry with it a clerical meaning. *Hupeeretees*, is, in its primary meaning, an under-rower, one who sat in the rower's bench of the ancient trireme-vessels, under the command of a superior officer; but in its secondary sense it is any inferior officer, chiefly of the civil courts, the apparitor, sergeant, or constable; also any servant, official or domestic, state-servant or house-servant; and lastly, any one who renders service in any matter or duty.

In the Gospels the word is frequently translated "officer" or "servant." Thus:

Matt. v. 25. Lest "the judge deliver thee to the *officer (hupeeretee)*."

Mark xiv. 54. "Peter followed him ..... even into the palace of the high priest, and he sat *with the servants (meta ton hupeereton)*."

In the following instances, however, we find it rendered *minister:*

Luke i. 2. "Which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and, *ministers of the word (hupecretai tou logou);*" equivalent, according to Kuinoel, to *agents of the affairs recorded.*

Acts xiii. 5. "And they had also John to their *minister (hupeereteen);*" *i.e.* assistant in service.

Acts xxvi. 16. "I have appeared unto thee ..... to make thee a *minister, (hupecretcen, servant)* and a witness."

1 Cor. iv. 1. "Let a man so account of us as of the *ministers (hupeeretas, servants)* of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

This latter text is probably often read, though unconsciously, as one of the *clerical* passages of the New Testament; yet when closely examined and compared with others, it appears to be of rather an opposite tendency. We do indeed often hear the clergy tell us that they are "stewards of mysteries" and "ministers of Christ;" but here the minister is simply the servant, and we must not forget that Peter gives the stewardship to all believers; "as every man hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good *stewards* of the manifold grace of God." (1 Pet. iv. 10.) Dr. Arnold, in his "Miscellanies," p. 22, 23, has shown that "mysteries" here are the mysteries or profound truths of the kingdom, and not the sacraments of

Baptism and the Lord's Supper as frequently understood.

§ 9. *Imposition of Hands.*

We have now only to examine the last stronghold of the clerical system—the imposition of hands, a subject which affects the whole order of the clergy and all its accompaniments. So great indeed is the influence of this ceremony on the minds of many, that they consider the whole question of the sacerdotal order clearly established by the instances of imposition of hands recorded in the New Testament; and it must be confessed that the Papists, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Independents,* and the Wesleyans, are in accord on this subject. *Imposition of hands creating a clerical order*, they all discover in the Scriptures; only they cannot agree amongst themselves who are the true clergy, and by which of them the ceremony is most accurately performed.

But granting that there is any truth in that which has been already argued, then it must be obvious that the "ministry" of the New Testament differs so widely from any existing ministerial order that we need not be very solicitous to inquire

* In formal words the Dissenters do not allow that they create a clerical order; but all their practices and their habitual language clearly show that they *think* they have a clergy; their ministers are called clergymen, and always claim the title of Reverend. They distinguish also very accurately between "the secular" and "the spiritual" officers of their churches—the deacon's office they tell us is *secular*, and the minister's *spiritual*.

about "a regular ministry, ordained by imposition of hands;" for unless the advocates of the clerical order can succeed in setting aside these statements from the New Testament, then is their system virtually undermined. But let us, nevertheless, for argument's sake, waive any preceding proofs, and very briefly examine the popular theory of "an ordained ministry." Now, according to this theory, the regular minister has been ordained "to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments," by virtue of the imposition of hands of a clerical body already existing. Let us advert to both these points in detail.

§ 10. *Administering the Sacraments.*

As to "administering the sacraments" the term is wholly unknown in scripture. There are no "sacraments" in the New Testament. The churches of Rome and England talk much of "the sacraments;" and the dissenters, copying those churches, or rather retaining the practices which they received originally from Rome through the church of England, enlarge on the mysterious theme; but the Christian who is guided by the Scriptures need not trouble himself about any theological language which he cannot find in them. As for baptism, which they call one of the sacraments, there is no scripture proof that it was performed by any "minister," taking this word even in the wide sense of *diakonos*. The baptism of the converts in the house of Cornelius was not performed by any "minister," for, as far as *we are* informed, the only "minister" present was

Peter, and he "*commanded* them to be baptized" (Acts x. 48); that is, he did not baptize them himself: and though doubtless the traditional school would assure us that "the certain brethren from Joppa" who accompanied Peter (verse 23) were clergymen, and "administered the sacrament of baptism" on that occasion, yet no such statement appears in Scripture; and therefore it may be dismissed with other kindred errors. Neither is there any evidence that the presence of a minister, or an elder, or a bishop, was considered indispensable in those meetings of the believers, when, on the first day of the week, they assembled to break bread. Paul gives many directions to the Corinthians concerning those meetings; but he never once names or even alludes to any elder, bishop, or ordained minister, as likely to be present on those occasions. If there were elders in the church of Corinth, they would of course break bread with the rest; but so little did Paul know about "ordained ministers administering the sacrament" that he neither names the minister nor the sacrament; and how this omission can be accounted for, if in those days there were either "ordained ministers" or "sacraments," we see not. Let those who can, explain this difficulty.

The ecclesiastical phraseology of "administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper" is in vain sought for in the New Testament. The Lord's Supper is thus described there, "Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread." (Acts xx. 7.) And this simple state-

ment, made if possible still more simple by Paul's allusions to the mode of meeting in the Corinthian church (see 1 Cor. xi. 20–34), ought to be sufficient to dissipate all our ideas about ceremonies and clergymen in the observance of the Lord's Supper. The truth is this: on the first day of the week the brethren met together to break bread; and if in those meetings ministers, that is *diakoni*, were present, or if elders were of the number, they would take the bread and wine amongst the rest; but neither the sacrament nor the clergy had then been invented. In the second century of church-history, they begin to make their appearance.

§ 11. *Preaching the Gospel.*

Then, as to "preaching the Gospel," no such faculty was conveyed by any imposition of hands or any ordination; for if that had been the case, then of course no other door to preaching the Gospel could have been opened. Now to the existence of unordained preachers we have a direct testimony: "Saul made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." (Acts viii. 3, 4.) Was this an irregular and uncanonical proceeding? Of course all clergymen are bound to declare that it was, because these preachers had not received "holy orders;" but the Scriptures here, as in many other ecclesiastical questions, disagree with the clergy, for it is

written further, "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as . . . . . Antioch, preaching the word . . . . . *And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.*" (xi. 19–21.)

Now if this had been irregular, not only would the inspired writer have marked it with disapprobation, but the then existing church would assuredly have corrected the practice, and laid down some canon against "lay preaching." But not so; for the "tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church: . . . . . and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch: who, when he came, and *had seen the grace of God, was glad*, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." (verses 22—24.)

This narrative, if duly weighed, destroys the whole fabric of a "regular ministry ordained to preach the gospel;" and it brings us to this point, that the churches of these days will not tolerate practices in which the believers of the apostolical era greatly rejoiced, and which drew forth the commendation and thankfulness of "good men who were full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Would the Church of England, under similar circumstances, send forth its "lay members" to preach the Gospel? Did it do so in the time of the Commonwealth, when the hand of power bore heavily on the episcopal party? Has the Church of Rome ever authorized preaching by any but clergymen? or would it, or

could it, under any circumstances, tolerate such an irregularity? Do the Dissenters generally encourage "lay-men" to preach in their chapels? If lay-men were allowed to assume this ministerial prerogative, it would supersede the clergy, disenthrone the oligarchy of the pulpit, and bring to nought that "official distinction and authority," which we are assured is not always sufficiently valued in their ordained ministers,* though "they are appointed as living oracles to announce, and as ministers of the temple to interpret, the utterances and will of God." (*Discourses of Robt. M'All, LL.D.*, i. 421.)

In the Pontifical of the Church of Rome we find that the bishop, in the ordination of a clergyman, confers the power of preaching when he grants deacon's orders; and that in the previous grades of doorkeeper, reader, exorcist, acolythe and subdeacon, this privilege is withheld. In conferring deacon's orders, the bishop says, "Dearly beloved son, as thou art now to be promoted to the Levitical order, deeply ponder to what a degree in the church thou art approaching, for a deacon ought to be a minister at the altar, to baptize and to preach." And in the Church of England, the bishop says to the deacon, "Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the church of God, and to preach the same, *if thou be thereto licensed by the bishop.*"

* "It is my decided conviction, that in some of our churches the pastor is depressed far below his just level. He is considered merely in the light of a speaking brother. He has no official distinction and authority." *Church Member's Guide*, p. 57.

This is man's system, but it is otherwise in the inspired volume.

§ 12. *Ordination.*

The case of Apollos (Acts xviii. 24), is exactly to the point. He was "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures . . . . . instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." This was his *ordination*, "I have believed, and therefore have I spoken;" and this is the ordination that a Christian, instructed by the words of Scripture, is called upon to own—the ordination of faith through the Holy Spirit. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." (2 Cor. iv. 13.)

This also was the ordination of others whom Paul mentions, "I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they *have addicted themselves to the ministry* [*diakonia*] of the saints), that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboreth." (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.) This is remarkable; "the house of Stephanas" is a very wide expression; the whole family had addicted themselves to the ministry; they had not been ordained to this ministry by canonical sanctions, but had, without the help of a bishop, or of the presbytery,* taken upon themselves "the sacred functions." Besides this, they had not only addicted

* See page 84.

themselves, but *ordained* themselves; for so the translators were bound to render the word *etaxan*, if they had had any regard to consistency. In Romans xiii. 1, they so give it, "The powers that be are *ordained* of God;" but here the translation is changed, and a meaning is given which the original will scarcely bear. To these irregular ministers Paul requires that the Corinthians should submit themselves, and not only to them, but to all who, like them, had helped in the service of the Gospel. Such is the ordination of the Scriptures, which the translators keep back where it might properly appear, or bring forward where there is no authority for it, as in Acts i. 22, "Must one be *ordained to be* a witness with us of his resurrection." The ecclesiastical phrase, "ordained to be," is wholly wanting in the original. The word is simply *genesthai*, and we should read the passage thus, "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out amongst us . . . . . must one be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Remembering, then, that the words "ordination" and "ordain," when used in matters of sacred import, are liable to be misunderstood, and though they will carry the signification of "appointment," yet that, by juxta-position with certain circumstances recorded, they may convey the idea of *clerical consecration*, we shall easily perceive how these ambiguous words in the English translation of the Scriptures are calculated to mislead the unsuspecting reader. In Titus i. 5, we read thus, "I left

thee in Crete that thou shouldest ..... *ordain* elders in every city as I had appointed thee." This certainly looks not a little like canonical consecration or ordination, and we know that the text is continually quoted by its supporters in order to establish the clerical theory; but the words of the original will by no means bear such an interpretation, as we shall presently see. The word "ordain" is the rendering of the verb *kathisteemi*, meaning "to appoint," "to make," "to constitute." In the following instances it is so translated:

Matt. xxv. 21. "I will *make (katasteeso)* thee ruler over many things."

Luke xii. 14. "Who *made (katesteese)* me a judge or a divider over you."

Rom. v. 19. "As by one man's disobedience many *were made (katestathesan)* sinners, so by the obedience of one *shall* many *be made (katastathesontia)* righteous."

Acts vi. 3. "Look out .... seven men .... whom ye *may appoint (katasteesomen)* over this business."

Such being the usage of the word and its true meaning, we can at once perceive how the rendering it by the word *ordain*, in Titus i. 5, is calculated to make us suppose that Titus did, by clerical consecration, ordain certain elders; whereas he only *appointed* them, where churches already existed, selecting those individuals who were spiritually gifted for superintendence—in fact recognizing the gift; for it was "the gift," and not Titus, which determined what the men were to be; and according to that gift, whatever it might be, must they

exercise their ministry; hence Paul enjoins Timothy not to neglect "the gift" which he had received, and which was given him by prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Timothy received a gift; but what that particular gift might have been, we are not informed.

The persons whom Titus appointed were the elders or overseers, or, to use an ecclesiastical word, *bishops*, for this is the name given to them in the next verse; and it is worthy of remark, that this very passage, which is much quoted by the Episcopalians as one particularly fortifying the views of their party, does in fact sadly damage the diocesan theory; for we find that Titus is appointing overseers or bishops in every city or town in Crete: not one bishop for the whole island to rule "the diocese of Crete," but bishops, that is, more than one, perhaps many, *in every city*, and that by Paul's express desire! Crete is an island about two hundred and seventy miles long and fifty miles broad, and in the days of Paul contained a hundred cities;* as, therefore, the direction given to Titus was to appoint bishops in every city, there must have been a very large number of them in the island—far too large to allow the diocesan system elbow-room. Indeed, it is manifest that "the bishop" of the Scriptures could have had a diocese only as large as the city or town in which he dwelt; though even there his diocese must have been divided, for Paul speaks of these elders or bishops in the plural

* Plin. iv. 12. Mela ii. 14. Solin, xvi.

number, "Elders in every city," more than one—in fact, as many as had received gifts for the office! Neither is this a solitary confutation of the diocesan theory, for we read elsewhere that Paul and Barnabas chose elders in every church in Lycaonia (Acts xiv. 23.)

To return, however, to the passage in question, we conclude that it ought to be translated—"For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ..... *appoint* elders in every city, as I had directed thee."

The original is translated "ordain" in other passages where clerical consecration might thereby seem to be implied. "Every high priest taken from among men is *ordained* for men in things pertaining to God." (Heb. v. 1.) "Every high priest is *ordained* to offer gifts and sacrifices" (Heb. viii. 3); and yet, in another text, relating to the same subject, in the same Epistle, this word is truly translated, "The law *maketh* men high priests which have infirmity" (vii. 28). "Ordination" was not here wanted, as it speaks not of priests ordaining priests. Neither is this to be considered a small and unimportant matter; for when we find in one place of Scripture that Titus "ordained" elders or bishops in the cities of Crete, and in another that the high priest was "ordained" to make offerings and sacrifices, is it surprising that the unsuspecting reader should connect the two ordinations together, and find in the ordination of the high priest something very like the ordination of the bishop? A careful

examination of the text does, however, immediately dissipate the fallacy, and brings before us quite another meaning.

But the clerical consecration, through the instrumentality of the word "ordain," appears also in the translation given of the word *cheirotoneo.* "And when they (Paul and Barnabas) had *ordained* them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed." (Acts xiv. 23.) Here, doubtless, it is generally understood that Paul and Barnabas consecrated elders into the clerical office; but let us see how "ordination," thus ingeniously introduced through this word, is, in the only other passages where it occurs, evaded. "Him God raised up the third day and showed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses *chosen before (cheirotonemenois)* of God." (Acts x. 41.) Why not "*ordained before* of God;" or if "chosen" were the right word here, why was it the wrong one in the other passages?

But again; we have sent "Titus who was *chosen (cheirotonetheis)* of the churches to travel with us." (2 Cor. viii. 19.) This is truly remarkable; the translators will allow Paul and Barnabas to "ordain" elders, but they will not permit the churches to ordain Titus—"the bishop of Crete;" in fine, on this subject, by bringing forward or keeping back the word "ordain" they make the Scriptures say whatever harmonizes with their own system.

It is worthy of observation, in passing, that

though our translators have not recognized the ordination of Titus by the churches, they have not been able to suppress the unmanageable fact, that Matthias was chosen or "ordained" into the apostolical office by the one hundred and twenty disciples at Jerusalem, some of whom were women (Acts i. 14, 15, 26),—a fact which, if duly considered, must for ever vitiate the origin of the apostolical office, as it is represented to us by the Episcopalians. The apostolical office, they tell us, is perpetuated in their bishops, and the translators have done their utmost to support this theory by making Judas a bishop (Acts i. 20); but even granting all this to be true, then it follows that the first bishop, after our Lord's departure, was "ordained" *by the disciples* at Jerusalem: from which we draw the conclusion, that if the fountain-head is of this nature, the whole stream that flows from it ought to partake of the same elements.

One more instance may suffice: "And he *ordained* (*epoiese*) twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." (Mark iii. 14.) This was obviously an important place in which to introduce "ordination": it is the record of our Lord's choosing the twelve apostles; and the fact is here described as if our Lord had, in some way, conferred ordination as a necessary preliminary to preaching the Gospel. But "ordain" is here the unwarranted translation of a word which simply means to make or do: it occurs some hundred times in the New Testament, but has no where else been thus rendered. If a

secondary and figurative meaning were required for the word, "appoint" was obviously that which ought to have been selected, according to the sense in Rev. i. 6, "*has made (epoiesen, appointed)* us kings and priests." Calvin has, however, thus expressed the meaning—"Et fecit ut duodecim essent secum, et ut emitteret eos ad prædicandum."

Having thus unravelled some of the intricacies of this question, it may be instructive to observe how the Scriptures have been perverted in order to perpetuate a delusion. "When our Lord," says Bishop Beveridge, "had died and risen from the grave, and when he was about to ascend into heaven, he promoted his apostles into the episcopacy, that he *might leave behind him the conservators of his own place.* The first form of this episcopal consecration is recorded in John xx. 21, 22: where Jesus says to his apostles who were all collected together—'Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you; and when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' I confess that our Lord had before this ordained his apostles, but only to preach the Gospel, and to confirm it with miracles. (Mark iii. 13, 14; Matt. x. 1.) But now for the first time after his resurrection, He says, 'As the Father has sent me, so send I you.' From which it most clearly appears, that by this second and last ordination, celebrated as it were by many ceremonies, the apostles were advanced to a higher grade than they enjoyed before, or rather (as far as relates to the faculty of ordaining and exercising

ecclesiastical discipline) to that very grade into which Christ himself had been consecrated by the Father. By the virtue of their first ordination, therefore, the apostles preached the Gospel; but by this last consecration they were made bishops, and so, supplying upon earth the place of their absent Lord, they did themselves create other bishops."

Mark the fatal error of this passage! For the prelate, in his anxiety to establish ceremonies of consecration and worldly mitres, has forgotten or concealed the fact that, on the occasion recorded in John xx. 21, 22, and on which he builds his whole theory, *Thomas, one of the apostles, was absent;* for it follows immediately—"but Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came." So, that according to this interpretation of the prelate, Thomas, a favourite apostle with the Episcopalians, would receive no "faculty of ordaining and exercising discipline," and consequently must have lost his station "as a conservator of the place of Christ," to the no small detriment of "the apostolical succession," and all its assumed benefits and prerogatives.

A word further as to imposition of hands; take the following instance, which is much urged by clergymen: "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers . . as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and *laid their hands on*

them, they sent them away." (Acts xiii.) Here then, if this instance is of any avail, it ought to be shown that Paul and Barnabas had never preached the Gospel before; that they never had been sent forth before on the ministry or service of the Lord; and that on this occasion they, for the first time, received a license "to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments." We find, however, in Acts ix, an account of Paul's having preached a long time, not less than seven years, before this event: nay, both Paul and Barnabas had been preaching *in Antioch* a whole year, and had been sent by the disciples of that city to Jerusalem, with a collection made for the brethren in Judea (xi. 30); so that their ministry, not only elsewhere, but remarkably in this very Antioch, had been for a long time tolerated without the "imposition of hands." Again, if this was indeed an "ordination" of Paul, we find the teachers and prophets ordaining an apostle!—a fact that would sadly derange the theory of the apostolical succession, which assumes that our Lord alone ordained the apostles, and the apostles ordained the clergy. Moreover, it would reverse the order of precedence as set forth in Scripture, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers" (1 Cor. xii. 28), whereas, in this narrative, supposing Paul and Barnabas to have been ordained by imposition of hands for the ministry, the order would have been "*first* prophets and teachers, *secondarily* apostles."

Again, this sending forth of Paul and Barnabas

was by the Holy Ghost (Acts xiii. 4); and where is that power of ordination now? The bishops in the Romish and English communions do indeed profess to convey the Holy Ghost in their ceremonies of ordination; but we know that this is an assumption without any foundation. The Presbyterians and Dissenters do not now *profess* to convey any spiritual gift, ordinary or extraordinary, by their imposition of hands; and therefore they practice a ceremony without power or meaning; but in the days of the apostles empty ceremonies were not performed.

Again, the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, takes pains to make them understand that he did not owe his ministry to any ordination or appointment of man, "I neither received it (the Gospel) of man, neither was I taught it, ... but when it pleased God ..... to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood [that is, I consulted not with any man, nor did I follow any man's advice, order, or direction]: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia. ..... Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." This is indeed a plain statement; and it clearly shows that Paul thought nothing of any appointment of man, though that man might be an apostle. According to the succession theory, the apostles were the

fountain of all lawful authority for ministry; but Paul sought not that fountain; nay, he takes pains to inform us that he kept clear of it: therefore, as he was not ordained by the apostles, we may be quite sure he was not ordained, several years afterwards, when he had been previously long engaged in the ministry, by the prophets and teachers of Antioch.

Another passage in the Scripture is frequently wrested from its true meaning to prove ordination by imposition of hands. It is in Paul's Epistle to Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with *the laying on of the hands* of the presbytery" (1 Tim. iv. 14); and again, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee by *the putting on of my hands.*" (2 Tim. i. 6). What then was this gift? A license to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments? Certainly not: it was the gift—*charisma*—of the Holy Ghost, which was conveyed to Timothy, as it would appear, by the laying on of the hands of Paul and the elders: and we know that this power did exist in those days; for we find that Peter and John, after praying that the Samaritan converts might receive the gift, *laid "their hands on them*, and they received the Holy Ghost; and when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, *Give me also this power*, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost." (Acts viii. 18.) *And again*, at Ephesus, Paul found certain disciples

who knew only of John's baptism: on these Christians, after they had been baptized in the name of Jesus, Paul laid his hands, and then "the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." (Acts xix. 6.) It was doubtless some such gift as this which Timothy had received; perhaps the gift of tongues or of prophecy, or the power of working miracles, "signs and wonders," any or all of these, or some other gift, of which perhaps there is no record left: and this word *charisma*, which Paul uses in allusion to this gift imparted to Timothy, is the specific term for the gifts which the Holy Ghost then conferred on the church. (See Rom. i. 11; xii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 7; xii. 4, 9, 28, 30.)

If then Timothy was ordained into the clerical order by imposition of hands, so also were the Samaritan converts and the "certain disciples" at Ephesus; for they likewise received a gift by imposition of hands: and indeed the advocates of the clerical system, if they would build anything on the case of Timothy, ought boldly to assert that the Samaritan and Ephesian disciples were ordained either priests or deacons.

But in relation to this question we do not find Paul's first "*ordination*" is ever brought forward; which, after all, but for one inconvenient circumstance, might be more plausibly referred to than any other. Thus it is recorded:—"Ananias ..... entered into the house; *and putting his hands on him* [Paul] said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou

camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he arose and received sight forthwith, and was baptized." (Acts ix. 17, 18.)

This instance is clear on the point that Paul received the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands, and that it was at the very beginning of his service in the church. This therefore looks much like "ordination by imposition of hands;" but then, unfortunately, if this be allowed, it would follow that Paul was ordained before he was baptized, an uncanonical irregularity wholly opposed to the clerical system; and moreover, the person who then "ordained him by imposition of hands" was not an apostle, bishop, or elder, but simply a "certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias" (ver. 10); in fact, according to the Papal ideas of these days, a mere lay-man: and yet this "lay-man," without the assistance of any of the clergy, without the presence of any bishop, lays his hands on Paul, and so confers on him the Holy Ghost! We can therefore well understand how the advocates of a "regular ordained ministry" are disposed to pass over this remarkable occurrence, and prefer rather to quote the imposition of hands by the church at Antioch (Acts xiii.), which has been already considered.

Having then seen that imposition of hands does not, according to the Scripture record, confer the power of "preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments," and having seen also that in many

cases the imposition of hands took place, where confessedly no clerical designation or privilege was conferred, we need not feel the least perplexity in regard to this question. We conclude by stating:—

1. That imposition of hands sometimes means simple benediction; "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray: ..... and he laid his hands on them." (Matt. xix. 13, 15.)

2. Sometimes recognition of service in the church, as in the case of the seven brethren chosen "to serve tables;" which certainly was not ordination to the "ministry," as the serving of tables on that occasion was avowedly kept distinct from the "ministry of the word." (Acts vi. 4—6.)

3. Sometimes separation to a particular work, and that by express command of the Holy Ghost. (Acts xiii.)

4. Sometimes an act whereby the gift of the Holy Ghost was imparted, as when Ananias, "a certain disciple," laid his hands on the apostle Paul. (Acts ix. 27.)

5. Sometimes also a visible sign of performing a miracle, as when the disciples were empowered to lay hands on the sick, and they recovered. (Mark xvi. 18.)

§ 13. *General remarks on Ministry.*

The train of remark thus far pursued should be considered but as introductory to a still more important view of the subject—a view almost lost sight of in these days—viz., that "ministry,"

when rightly understood, is not merely for government, or securing discipline, or keeping the people in subjection, but for preserving in vigorous healthfulness the spiritual body to which it appertains. One evidence of its accomplishing this end is to be sought and recognized in the degree in which it is promotive of the *love of the brethren.* Yes, Christian Reader, understand this truth, that God's ministry is not appointed by his most wise ordinance, to maintain a well ordered congregation under effectual clerical management; which is the utmost extent of excellence that some people, when arguing for an "ordained ministry," ever seem to look to. The mind of the Spirit concerning the ministry which He raises up, is that it should promote that love without which a visible church is an inoperative and lifeless thing, a machine out of order, and therefore useless. And hence it is that when Paul wishes to urge the love of the brethren, he connects it with "ministry;" and when he speaks of ministry, he concludes naturally, pursuing only an obvious concatenation of thought, with the kindred subject of love. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says, "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, *forbearing one another in love;* endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—*there is one body.*" (iv. 1—4.) And having thus mentioned "the one body," he proceeds to describe it, and the various gifts imparted to it "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

Christ." This is the body which possesses the power of growth—not a mere comely block chiselled by man's art into a dead *image* of the Church, but a living Church, growing "unto a holy temple in the Lord;" not a body with a clerical head and lifeless lay members, but a body "compacted by that which every joint supplieth." For every part is to be "effectually" working, and then, and not till then, can it grow "in newness of life," unto the "edifying of itself in love."

In the Epistle to the Romans, he closes the subject of gifts in the church with these remarkable words, "Let love be without dissimulation" (xii. 9), evidently implying, that the undissembled love of the saints would find a congenial atmosphere wherever all the members of the body were *allowed* to receive and exercise gifts of the Holy Spirit. But no such atmosphere as this exists, or can exist, where "a regular ordained ministry" has inflicted ministerial death on the whole body,—where the clergyman has been appointed by man to be the sole pastor, teacher, evangelist, ruler, and prophet; just as if the human body, in a fit of lunacy, had elected the hand or the foot to perform the functions of all the other members; which, as a consequence of this infatuated procedure, had been compelled to remain in a state of reverential inactivity. That flow of life is cut off which was meant to feed all the members, and the monopoly of vitality is given to one favoured limb, which, consequently, is wholly inefficacious in imparting life to the rest of the body.

In the Epistle to the Corinthians Paul says, "Follow after charity (love), and desire spiritual gifts (1 Cor. xiv.); and the precept is in many ways remarkable. In the 12th chapter he had discoursed at large on the gifts and ministries of the Spirit; in the 13th, by a connection which is not often noticed, he introduces the subject of love, or *agape;* and then in the 14th chapter he adds, "Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts," as a preface to that which follows concerning the order of the church; so that, in fact, the 13th chapter, though apparently a parenthesis between the 12th and 14th, is most intimately connected with them both. *It is part of the same subject,* because that love, *agape,* or charity, which has been commended to all generations by Paul's magnificent eulogy, is not merely the charity of isolated Christians, but of the children of God living harmoniously together as one redeemed family, under the guidance and ministrations of the Holy Spirit, and exhibiting the life of the body according to God's design, and not according to the wisdom of man. "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, *to the which also ye are called in one body,* and be ye thankful." (Col. iii. 15.)

But it is not in general principles only that we discover true ministry and love united, for we find precepts addressed to the believers, directing them to act as pastors one to another, and, in so doing, to show forth this very love, which betokens the living and growing body of Christ. In the Epistle to *the Hebrews, it* is written, "Take heed, brethren,

lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. . . . . But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. iii. 12.) They are to warn, to admonish one another daily; every day they are to be guarding the sheepfold; every day they are to be looking warily, lest the evil heart of unbelief open a breach for the enemy in the visible household of faith. But whilst they are called upon to be thus watchful for one another's souls, not a syllable is dropped whereby we might understand that this was to be the exclusive duty of "an ordained minister." Indeed, the very fact that such a precept is addressed to "the brethren," renders it impossible that the "Hebrews" should have been acquainted with "an ordained ministry," invested with those exclusive powers and prerogatives which, in these days, are habitually considered to be inseparable from the "ministry." The clergy of all parties often assure us in their sermons that the guarding and feeding of the fold is their peculiar province, in which no one may interfere; but quite otherwise do we find it in Holy Scripture.

Paul thus addresses the Thessalonians:—"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded support the weak, be patient toward all men." (1 Thess. v. 14). Other passages are entirely to the same effect. "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . . . but exhorting one another." (Heb. x. 24, 25.) "As every man hath received

the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.)

Now not only are such passages of high value, as incidentally confirming the truth, that the duties always assigned exclusively to the clergy under the *clerical* system, are, in *the scriptural* economy, apportioned to all believers, but as showing that they were shared amongst the apostles, and all the disciples of that day. For instance, when Paul says to the Thessalonians, "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak," he clearly assigns these duties to the whole body of believers. In like manner we find the Hebrew church reminded of their duty to "exhort one another daily . . . . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." That Paul and Barnabas should exhort the saints, the clerical school would think quite proper, because they were apostles, and had been "ordained by imposition of hands;" but the same school would see nothing but irregularity in lay-men daily imitating the apostles in so doing.

Moreover, it is to be observed, that though in the Epistles to the Hebrews and Thessalonians there is distinct reference made to those who were "over them in the Lord" (Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Thess. *v. 12), yet it* is not on those overseers especially

that the duty of exhortation is pressed by the apostle. The epistles are not directed to the overseers; the building-up of the saints is not referred to them; admonition, exhortation, comfort, and warning are not spoken of as their exclusive province (though doubtless exhortation and comfort were also within their province); but the whole church is addressed, as if all the believers were mutually to edify one another, yea and mutually to teach and minister to one another, as when Paul, having explained to the Thessalonians the second coming of the Lord, concludes thus: "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The Epistle to the Philippians furnishes similar evidence, and in abundance. Indeed, the whole tenor of that epistle is to this point; for though the overseers and servants of the church are mentioned in the opening of the epistle, after the saints (i. 1), yet the epistle is addressed to the brethren generally; and it is not of "the clergy," but of all the brethren that Paul speaks, when he prays that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment," and that they "may approve things that are excellent" [or try the things that differ] (i. 9),—a prayer which by many would be thought applicable only to clergymen. It is "the brethren" (i. 12), that he "would have understand" how through his imprisonment at Rome *many* of the brethren had waxed confident to preach Christ, and that he rejoiced they had done so, though these "many" preachers were unquestionably not "ordained clergymen."

It is "the brethren" whom he desires to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving for the faith of the Gospel." (i. 27.) Them also he admonishes to hold "forth the word of life." (ii. 16); to "beware of evil workers" (iii. 2); to "walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing," as he himself did (iii. 16); to "stand fast in the Lord" (iv. 1.), &c. &c.; and all this he confirms by commencing his letter "to all the saints," and by finishing it "to all the saints." (iv. 21). And this is the more remarkable, because he does not omit the overseers and servants of the church ("bishops and deacons," Eng. Trans.) He mentions them, indeed, but never as if he thought the overseers and servants had any official prerogative which should entitle them, as being distinct from "laymen," to receive his instructions and execute his precepts.

Again, in writing to the Colossians, he addresses "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ," and none others: it is the brethren whom he wishes to increase "in the knowledge of God" (i. 10), "and unto all riches of the full assurance of the understanding." (ii. 2). He tells the brethren that "they are complete in" Christ (ii. 10), and that, no man therefore, "should judge them in meat and drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the sabbath." He bids them beware, lest any man spoil them "through philosophy and vain deceit," or beguile them of their reward, by "intruding into those things which he hath not seen;" he *warns them* not to be subject to ordinances, "the

commandments and doctrines of men;" he reminds them that their "speech should be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that they may know how they ought to answer every man;" and that they should "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God;" and then, after particularly addressing "wives, husbands, children, servants, and masters," he adds nothing about priests or other official ministers. The message to Archippus (iv. 17), has been already under review, and, therefore, need not here be again discussed; but supposing, for argument's sake, that Archippus was an ordained minister—say, bishop of the Colossians—we then find Paul, in a sort of postscript, desiring the church to remind that dignitary to fulfil his ministry, whilst the dignitary himself is wholly passed over in all the rest of the epistle.

Now, let these things be applied to modern churches. Suppose that a Christian from some distant region, acquainted with Christianity only as it is presented in the New Testament, and following the language and ideas of the Scriptures alone, were to write a letter to Christians in a certain parish in our country, what would be the style of his letter? He would address it to the church or to the believers in such a town or village, and whatever might be the importance of his communications, he would not, as in these days, direct the whole subject-matter to the priest or the clergyman. "Reverend Sir," would be to him an unknown formulary; and if he were informed that the minister would consider it an insult if the letters

were not specially addressed to him, and that "the saints" were in these days all "laymen," excepting the "minister," who was ordained to be their sole ruler and teacher; and that "the saints" would deem it strange and indecorous if a letter about religion was addressed to them, and not to their minister—would not this foreigner from a distant region naturally conclude that we had changed our religion, and that we had ceased, in fact, to be Christians? How could he come to any other conclusion? And who, that examines ministry in the New Testament, and compares it with ministry in these days, can doubt but that there has been effected a fundamental revolution in the order which God appointed for the edification of His Church?

But then it will be said that Paul *does* allude to those who "are over them in the Lord." True, he does; but his allusions are in perfect keeping with the order then existing, and only tend to establish all that has been advanced in this argument. There *was* "rule" in the church; the Spirit unquestionably raised up government; government was a gift, a *charisma*, and it was sometimes united to, and sometimes separated from, teaching. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, *especially* they who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. v. 17), is an expression by which we ascertain that some of "the leaders" (*proestotes*) did *not* labor in word and doctrine, for if it were not so, Paul's distinction *would be* unintelligible, or rather would have no

meaning at all. "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thess. v. 12.) What is the foundation of the government here alluded to?—love. For where there is not love there cannot be esteem in the church of God, though in the churches of men, esteem for the clerical rulers is too often obtained on other grounds. Station in society, wealth, political power, oratorical talent, official prerogative, too frequently command the reverential respect of the people for their clergy: and sectarian zeal usually adds force to these considerations—to say nothing of that superstitious ignorance which powerfully prevails, and which leads the Protestant to esteem "the minister" with much of the same feeling with which a Papist reveres his priest. There are, indeed, instances where the ministers are deservedly beloved by their "people"; but, too often, love will be found to have but a small share in the esteem which they enjoy; for as the theory of official power, and the idea of prerogative, influence all the arrangements of human ministry, the ruling party usually expects as a right, and the ruled yields as a custom, that portion of reverence which is decorously conceded to official distinction. Human authority has, it may be, its mitres, its acts of synods, and all the weight of ecclesiastical canons, together with an usurpation of all ministerial life, and the monopoly by one man of that which should be open to all: and these things have their attrac-

tions; but heavenly authority in the church, that which comes down with the gifts distributed to the believers, is the evidence of superintending care on the part of those whose hearts the Lord directs; enabling them to watch over the footsteps of the flock, and, by counsel and example, by prayer and precept, by patience and forbearance, by gentle firmness and by spiritual wisdom, to keep aloof from the enclosure those things which would disturb the harmony, or prevent the Beloved One from coming into "his garden, and eating his pleasant fruits." Government is a distinct gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 28.)—and it is not in the power of man, by election or by any other known process, to confer it. It is, indeed, very easy to establish *ecclesiastical* rule, either by royal mandate, or patronal nomination, or popular suffrage; but wide is the difference between *ecclesiastical* and *spiritual* rule. Human laws can create the outline and the shadow of spiritual rule, but the substance, the living and the powerful reality, can be imparted only by Him who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, and with whom there "is no variableness neither shadow of turning." Spiritual rule is neither for lucre nor for lordship (1 Pet. v. 2, 3), but it is a branch of service, of ministry, of *diaconia;* a branch springing out of the true Vine. The office of government is the lowest and at the same time the highest service in the Church: it is the lowest, because he that is "over the flock," and has been called unto this service by the Lord, must ever *be washing the* disciples' feet. And how low are

those who are exercised in it called upon to stoop down; how deep is the humiliation, how trying to faith and patience, how wearisome to the body, how closely surrounded with anxieties and solicitudes, how conversant with tears and prayers and sighs, none can tell or imagine who have looked at these things only through the medium of ecclesiastical custom, but have not known them in their own experience. "And who is sufficient for these things?" Truly, we can reply only in the words of Scripture, "Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers (fitted us to be servants) of the New Testament." But in this service there is also a recompense, which hereafter is to be nothing less than a crown of glory (1 Pet. v. 4); and in the mean time the Chief Shepherd knows how to reward his servants, even during the heat and burden of the day.

§ 14. *Some of the Tendencies of Clerical Rule.*

Wide then is the difference between ecclesiastical and spiritual rule; for not only is every known form of clerical rule the result of a false principle, and a standing evidence of universal apostacy, but its whole tendency is to disturb the communion of believers. Many precious volumes have been published to establish the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; but when established the application of them is exclusively to individuals, and not to churches. The glory of the living temple, which, in Scripture, refers to the *collective* body of all the believers, is thus passed over, and one-half

of the New Testament becomes a sealed book, which theologians are unable to open, and which remains in consequence shut up to themselves and their unsuspecting disciples. Those portions which treat of justification by faith, or any of the cardinal points of theology, are often well argued so long as the writers confine themselves to these points; but when they proceed to treat on the ministry and the communion of believers, their chariot-wheels drag heavily, often terminating in confusion and error. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," is a doctrine almost unknown in professing Christendom; for it refers not to philanthropy, nor to courtesy, nor to alms-giving charity, nor to sympathetic beneficence. We have seen what the Scriptures teach concerning ministry; and whilst ministry lasted in accordance with the Scriptures, so also, beyond all question, did the communion of saints last; but when men had renounced the ministry of the Spirit, and had set up human government instead, then the new commandment (John xiii. 34) speedily disappeared; and, in lieu of it, was substituted that which we now see all around us,—the imposing solemnities of clerical authority. A regular ministry exists, with all its necessary appendages, and everything that can make it respectable in the view of the world; and many able preachers and excellent men there are; but the communion of believers is almost forgotten; the heavenly calling of the saints passed *over; and Christi*anity stands before the world an

unsightly phenomenon of sects and parties; whilst the living temple, the one body in Christ, has well nigh disappeared, like those splendid but illusive cities which, pictured on the vapors of a Syrian atmosphere, fill the spectator with admiration and astonishment, and then anon dissolve into nothingness, leaving the wilderness more desolate than before.

But is there no such thing then as a distinct function of teaching or preaching in the church? And if there is to be teaching and preaching, must there not be teachers and preachers? To this we reply, that diversity of gifts in the Lord's spiritual body does not necessarily create diversity of *grades* in those who possess such gifts. We acknowledge at once the necessity of teaching and of preaching in the church; but we deny that this fact lays a foundation for that distinction of *clergy* and *laity* which has obtained currency throughout Christendom, and which has opened a Pandora's box of evils and mischiefs to the church. Those functions which the Levitical priesthood represented are to be diffused throughout the general body of Christians, and cannot be appropriated or monopolized by any one class. Yet a variety of spiritual gifts is requisite for the building up of the body, and they are conferred on its members. By the congregation to which they belong, their gifts and endowments are perceived to be adapted to their exigences, and they acknowledge them accordingly. By so doing they do not confer any power upon them; they do not, strictly speaking, appoint them;

they simply acknowledge them as qualified for the work, and called by the Lord Himself to officiate in this capacity. But we see nothing in all this that necessarily constitutes them a distinct class. They are to the whole church what a particular organ is to the whole human body. To the eye, for instance, pertains the functions of seeing, but it cannot see apart from the body to which it belongs. So with the ear, the hand, the foot. They all have their several uses in the bodily economy, but they are not on this account in any manner *distinct* from the body. So in like manner the use or function of teaching or preaching does not constitute *a distinct grade* or *order* in Christian churches.

We are well aware how difficult it will be for many of our readers to rest in our conclusion, that there may be a distinction in office which does not amount to a distinction in official order or caste. By the distinct order or office of the clergy in the church we mean an order which *perpetuates itself* by some special form of ordination or inauguration, wherein the body of the church or the laity, as they are termed, have little or no share. That such an order of men, whether called priests, clergymen or ministers, was designed to exist in the Christian church is what we venture to call in question; while at the same time we freely admit and strenuously maintain that there is a functional ministry which is to be discharged by those who, by the Holy Spirit, are called to and qualified for it.

§ 15. *The Clerical System especially out of place among Protestant Non-Conformists.*

It may be deduced from all that has been said, that if any ecclesiastical institution or arrangement separates, or has a tendency to separate, the body of believers into two distinct classes, and to assign to one class a privilege or character which the other may not claim, then is the design of the gospel not answered, nor are some of its most important truths practically recognized. To point out the many particulars in which this separation is effected in the Episcopal church, would be superfluous; for that church is avowedly governed by a priesthood; and "the clergy" and "the laity" are distinguished by a broad line of demarcation. The prayer-book, in all its ritual, acknowledges the priest by its rubricks. Amongst Dissenters this is modified; and indeed, as to any official canon of church government, the priest has altogether disappeared from their churches; but that the clergy and the laity are perfectly distinct amongst Dissenters also is notorious; and it is quite evident that the laborious education for the ministry, the call, the ordination, the imposition of hands, the garb, the sole office of instructor, and divers other particularities, constitute their ministers *Clergymen;* and that "the people," as all non-clerical believers are called, are entirely separate in character and action from the clergy. The minister, on the Sabbath—that day on which all the brethren meet together—is the sole person that visibly

conducts the worship of God: no one but he speaks; no one but he prays; and this is usually the case all the year round. If therefore the brethren have indeed entered into the holiest of all, they none of them may open their mouths there; but have chosen one individual to do for the whole church, that which they cannot, or will not, do for themselves. If the Dissenters sincerely wished to establish such a mode of proceeding in their churches as, we may gather from the Scriptures, was the practice in the first æra, and of which the general bearing is evident enough, though some of the particulars may still be uncertain, they would allow at least a plurality of ministers, and indeed concede a liberty of ministry to all those who are gifted for the service. But such is not the case; one man alone is charged with ministering to the spiritual necessities of each congregation; whilst, however called and gifted for it by the blessed head of the Church Himself, no other member of the congregation is usually permitted to take any part in it. Thus many who may be divinely called to the work, and might become able ministers of the Gospel, are prevented by the false systems of men from exercising their gifts in the service of the Lord, and for the edification of the Church.

§ 16. *Some of the Evil Effects of the Distinction in question.*

The undoubted tendency of the existing arrangement is to beget inactivity amongst the people; *because they feel that* they have a spiritual delegate

in whose hands are placed those large and responsible duties which are supposed to attach to the ministerial office. Many there are who can thus find a ready excuse for their own lack of zeal: they think their pastor carries the keys of the church, and to him, therefore, they consign their spiritual energies, as if he were a general proxy for them and for all others in their works of faith and labours of love. What multitudes of church members might be numbered who take little or no personal interest in the well-being of the church, to say nothing of their own souls! How many are there who content themselves with the external acts of worship and a formal attendance on ordinances, leaving all the rest to the minister. But with these evils are connected others also; for to this source may be traced frequent discontent amongst the members, and bitter sorrow to many a worthy and laborious pastor.

The study and preparation expected for the pulpit, the pastoral visits, the attention to the particular spiritual cases of individuals, the schools, the prayer-meetings, the church-meetings, the public-meetings, and all the rest of the complicated duties attached to the office, impose a weight and multiplicity of cares on the shoulders of some pastors, which none but Atlantean shoulders could sustain; and yet if they neglect any part of these enormous duties, which a mistaken theory has apportioned to them, they are in jeopardy of forfeiting the esteem of some of their flock, as they too often discover to their no small discomfort and sorrow.

CHAPTER IV.

General Results.

We have, in the foregoing pages, exhibited the most important passages usually cited as affording a warrant for the institution of a priesthood or clergy, comprising an order of men distinct from the so-called laity. But to our own minds the proofs, from the inspired volume, of the intended existence of any such class of men in the Christian church are utterly wanting, and we do not, therefore, hesitate to consider the whole sacerdotal order, as at present established in Christendom, a stupendous fallacy, replete with tendencies of a most pernicious character to the interests of the Lord's kingdom. We are constrained, by what we consider the strictest logical necessity, to deny the validity of the claims set up in behalf of a separate clerical caste. There is a true ministry—not clergy—in the Lord's church on the earth, consisting of those who, in accordance with the representative character of the ancient Levites, are possessed of the requisite endowments for exercising the pastoral office towards the flock. Every other form of priesthood we are forced to regard not only as an anti-christian usurpation, but as having the effect of an organic hypertrophy in *the Lord's mystical* body. By attracting to itself

an over-measure of vital power, it robs the other portions of the system of their due share of spiritual vitality, and a paralysis of the members will be very certain to ensue. But little discernment, indeed, is requisite in order to perceive that the broad line of distinction held to exist between clergy and laity, acts disastrously upon the interior life of the church, by discharging the great mass of its members from that responsibility which properly pertains to every one without exception. What is more evident than that the fact of an individual being salaried and set apart to preside over the spiritual interests of a congregation, operates as a release to the bulk of the members from almost any duty but that of punctually paying their contributions and sitting devoutly in their seats from Sabbath to Sabbath, receiving with quiet assent whatever is dealt out to them. The practical working of the system is precisely such as to confirm the drift of our theoretical objections. It goes all along on the assumption that the actual work essential to the building up of the church is to be performed, not by the body collectively, but by a particular class acting as proxies for the rest. If we make the analogy of the human body the criterion in this matter, it would be as if all its organs and viscera should unite in feeing the brain to perform all their functions for them, while they should enjoy an exemption from their appropriate work. Is it possible for any one who is accessible to truth to avoid seeing that this cannot be consistent with the true Divine order?—that order which is so well expressed by

the apostle of the Gentiles,—"from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." This is the true model for a Christian church.

The precepts and intimations of the apostolic epistles may serve at least as documentary evidence, of a historical kind, as to the light in which this matter was viewed in the primitive church. "God hath tempered the body together having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; *but that the members should have the same care one for another.*" (1 Cor. xii. 24, 25.) "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, *ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1, 2.) Whoever was spiritual might feel this to have been a command to exercise the kindly office of restoring one who had unfortunately lapsed from his uprightness. Each was to bear the other's burdens. Again, "Now, we exhort you, *brethren*, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." (1 Thess. v. 14.) *Brethren* are here exhorted to warn, comfort, and support each other—a very principal feature of what is now considered as the pastor's peculiar work. "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, *and edify one another*, even as also ye do." (v. 11.) *Passages of this* nature might be largely multiplied,

but it is unnecessary. The gifts and services of the brethren are not to be superseded. The feeblest brother has as deep an interest in the general spiritual life of the congregation as the strongest. It is in fact the duty of every Christian to edify, warn, support, and comfort his brethren, as opportunities offer, and that on the ground of a common concern in the spiritual well-being of the body.

The early Christians, or those of the first century, never for a moment supposed that there was any priest remaining in the true service and worship of God, excepting Him only who had "entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption for us." They never thought that the preachers and teachers of the gospel were priests; that they had taken the place of the Sons of Aaron; that some of them were "lords" over others, some "Right Reverend," others "Very Reverend," and all, from the greatest to the least, *Reverend:* they never imagined that the body of believers were to be divided into two classes, one called "the clergy," and the others "the laity;" that the clergy were to be paid by the laity; were to be men of education and leisure; an order of Ecclesiastics, dressed in sable garments, administering to the "laity" grace and pardon.

But the church very soon fell into oblivion of its privileges, and returned with avidity to those things which had been destroyed. In the second century, the teachers began to utter strange doctrines as to the priestly functions of the Gospel

ministry, and in the third century, the pontifical heresy had made rapid advances to maturity.

It would be no difficult matter to suggest a variety of causes that were operative in bringing about this departure from the standard of primitive simplicity and purity; but let it suffice to advert to one; to wit—that tendency to *objectiveness*, which is inherent in the human mind; in other words, a craving for some visible object for the senses to rest on. The glory of Christ, in his priestly office, can be contemplated by faith alone. Hence our Lord pronounced a memorable blessing on those who should not be able to see, and yet should believe. This invisible glory is great beyond description, in its clearness, beauty, and consolation to those who have been instructed by the Spirit of Truth; but, to carnal minds, it is an abstract intangible doctrine without any semblance of reality; it affords no sort of satisfaction, comfort, or strength to the soul of a mere nominal Christian, and can be as little appreciated by him as any of the dry propositions of Euclid. But a visible priesthood, with power and parade, officiating within holy rails, at altars of gold or marble, and professing to represent the office of mediator by means of divers well-contrived ceremonies, is food for the natural man, such as his palate does exceedingly relish. Hence priestcraft is congenial to men, so long as its arts of rapacity and oppression do not render it an intolerable burden. Nothing but the Gospel, therefore, can save mankind from this wide-spread and deadly evil.

It is doubtless much more congenial to the in-

clination of the natural man to purchase exemption from self-denying duties at the price of an annual subscription for the support of a substitute, than to go forward and discharge them in person, especially when their discharge implies the maintenance of a spiritual state of mind. Accordingly, nothing is more obvious than the air of easy unconcern with which, on the Sabbath, far too many occupy their seats in the sanctuary, and pass on through the week, devolving all care of the interests of the church on the spiritual stipendary who undertakes the trust. This is undoubtedly a natural result of the system, and therefore, in speaking of it, we do not mean to reproach any to whom our remarks may apply. They have been educated and have grown up under the system; and a thousand influences have been operating to prevent any suspicion of its being wrong. They accordingly act as is natural under the circumstances. While a human priesthood is recognized in the church, it will not do for the office to remain a sinecure. The people pay the priests for taking charge of their souls, and why should they do that work themselves which they bargain with another to do in their stead? The fact is, the evil can never be reached but by striking at the fundamental error on which the whole rests,—to wit, a distinct priestly or clerical order. This is an institution which, in its present form, is to be traced back proximately to the corruptions of the Roman Catholic church, that church, of which the spirit of hierarchy is the animating soul. That the great reformer, Luther, had a very

clear perception of this is evident from the following passage in his "Letter addressed to the Bohemian Brethren:"—

. . . . "Let that rock stand to you unshaken—that, in the New Testament, of priest externally anointed there is none, neither can be: but if there be any, they are masks and idols, because they have neither example nor prescription of this their vanity, nor any word in Gospels or Epistles of the Apostles; but they have been erected and introduced by the mere invention of men, as Jeroboam did in Israel. For a priest, in the New Testament, is not made, but born; not ordained, but raised up; and he is born, not by the nativity of the flesh, but of the Spirit, that is, of water and the Spirit in the laver of regeneration. And all Christians are altogether priests, and all priests are Christians; and let it be anathema to assert that there is any other priest than he who is a Christian; for it will be asserted without the word of God, on no authority but the sayings of men, or the antiquity of custom, or the multitude of those who think so . . . . Christ was neither shaven nor anointed with oil to be made a priest; wherefore neither is it enough for any follower of Christ to be anointed to become a priest, but he must have something far different; which when he shall have, he will have no need of oil and shaving. So that you may see that the bishops erred sacrilegiously whilst they make their ordinations so necessary that, without these, they deny that any one can become a priest, although he is most holy, as Christ himself; and again, that a priest may be made by them, although he be more wicked than Nero or Sardanapalus. By which what else do they than deny that Christ is a priest with his Christians? for whilst they discharge their abominable office, they make no one a priest unless he first deny that he is a priest, and so by that very circumstance, while they make a priest, they in truth remove him from the priesthood . . . . . The min*istry of* the word is common to all Christians; that one *passage (1 Pet. ii.)* establishes it: 'Ye are a royal priesthood

that ye may show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' I beseech you, who are they that are called out of darkness into his marvellous light? Are they only anointed and ordained priests? or are they not *all* Christians? But Peter not only gives them the liberty, but commands them to declare the praises of God, which certainly is nothing else than to preach the word of God . . . . . As there is no other showing forth of the praises of God in the ministry of the Word than that common to all, so there is no other priesthood than a spiritual one, also common to all, which Peter hath here described. . . . . Therefore it hath now been sufficiently confirmed most strongly and clearly, that the ministry of the Word is the chief office in the church, altogether unique, and yet *common to all Christians*, not only by the right but also of command; wherefore the priesthood also must needs be both excellent and common; so that against these divine lightenings of God's word, of what avail are infinite fathers, innumerable councils, everlasting usages, and the multitude of the whole world?"

This is bravely said, though it has seldom found an echo in later days, nor are we by any means confident that the heroic Wirtemberger always wrote on this subject in the same strain. But that is immaterial. He saw then what we see now, that the priesthood of the Romish Church is the grand element of its power. And though the institution exists in all Protestant Churches in a modified and mitigated form, yet it is to that source that its origin is to be traced; and it is next to impossible to divest it of its inherent tendencies towards the evils of hierarchy and the other forms of abuse to which we have adverted.

While frankly avowing these sentiments we are perfectly aware of the light in which they will

be viewed by the majority of churchmen. They will look upon it as requiring nearly as much hardihood to deny a visible clergy in the church, as to deny the existence of the church itself. They will feel that a sad havoc is made of all their traditionary and cherished associations in connection with the church, the ministry, the Sabbath, the worship of God, and, indeed, everything sacred; and they will be prompted to put the question, whether we really mean *quite* so much as our words would seem to import. Assuredly we do; and we will thank any man to designate the point at which, if our premises are sound, we can *consistently* stop short of our present position. If there is no human priesthood to be recognized in the Lord's church, what authority is there for a clergy? We find it not, and therefore state our conclusions without reserve. No hesitation have we in saying that in a true and pure state of the church on earth, no other than the spiritual priesthood and the ministry or service of believers will be known, and what that is has been sufficiently unfolded in our previous remarks.

That a multitude of questions should be started as to the sequences of such a theory as we have now announced we can readily anticipate. Who shall propagate the doctrines of Christianity? Who shall conduct worship, and how shall it be done? What will be the use of a pulpit if there be no regularly inducted clergymen to fill it? That, in all *these respects*, the adoption of our views would work *great changes* in the existing order of things there

is no shadow of doubt. But we do not feel ourselves on this account precluded from advocating important principles. We hold that it is never too early to give utterance to reformatory truths. Though not at once acted upon, they are still working as a secret leaven in the minds of men, and in due time they will bring forth their legitimate fruits.

The trained and professional preacher, being supported for this very work, has time to devote himself to the careful preparation of his discourses, to elaborate them in a finished style, and by degrees to conform them to the most admired models of composition, and thus to serve up to his audience an intellectual treat set off in all the graces of eloquence. The consequence is, that the mind of the hearer, being accustomed to this kind of pulpit entertainment, comes at length to nauseate the more plain and homely style of extemporaneous discourse among brethren. And yet who is not conscious that this kind of communication takes a deeper hold of the thoughts and affections, and exercises more efficient control over the inner man, than the most studied oratorical displays. It is not the highly finished and elaborate discourses which usually do the most good. They excite admiration, it is true, but they seldom move the inner springs of action. They play round the head, but they reach not the heart. The plain and even homely utterances of a good man will commend themselves, by a certain unction, to every kindred mind, and the absence of literary or rhetorical qualities will not be felt.

Whatever goes to make the worship on earth most akin to the worship in heaven, ought to be the object aimed at by the Lord's people, in conducting their sabbath service. The more nearly it answers to our Lord's definition of worship, the greater will be that resemblance. "God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Another very important inference from our premises here forces itself upon us. How many congregations are kept back, and drag along a feeble existence, from an impression of the almost indispensable necessity of a minister not only to their well-being but to their being at all. We need not indeed be surprised at this; for a clergy will be sure to teach the absolute necessity of its own order to the welfare of the church, and in this way to lay the spell of inertia upon the mass of the laity. But it is easy to perceive what the result has been, and continues to be. Dependence upon an order of teachers and leaders professing to be divinely commissioned, and the fear of trenching upon the sanctity of their prerogatives, have tended to paralyze exertion on the part of the members, and to inure and reconcile them to a low state and a slow progress, in spiritual things. It is a positive disadvantage that men should have a hired functionary to do their thinking for them. The people actually need, for their own spiritual health, that intellectual and spiritual exercise from which their *ministers* now relieve them. Adult Bible classes *are to a great* extent conducted on this plan,

and nothing is more evident than their tendency to develop, among the members generally, the various qualifications necessary to sustain the system. So would it be in the services of the Sabbath; and we think it unquestionable that each congregation has a claim upon the energies and gifts of all its members.

We see no other method by which the little bands of believers, scattered over the country, can ever be prompted to arouse themselves from that torpid condition into which they are so prone to fall, than by being weaned from reliance on a professional ministry, and thrown upon their own resources; and how can this be done without discarding in toto the prevailing system of a clergy or a priesthood existing *as a distinct order of men?*

The noiseless and unobtrusive insemination of Christian doctrine and practice within the range of each one's personal influence, potent as it is, is not the sole ground of reliance in the propagation of religion. The press is a powerful executive instrument of the present age, by means of which the furtherance of the Lord's kingdom on the earth is largely to be effected. Here, then, is a channel through which united efforts can be made to tell upon the progress of truth and righteousness. And let us observe that, while the employment of lay missionaries and colporteurs in great numbers and on a large scale is not without its good results, this system of operation is, by too many, allowed to serve as a virtual discharge from the duty of direct personal efforts. The proper state of things

will not be reached till every one who is alive to his own responsibilities as a christian, shall feel himself constrained to become a missionary to his neighbour, instead of the work being done to his hands by proxy. The apathy which has heretofore so widely prevailed, is no doubt referable to the same general cause to which we have traced so many of the evils that have afflicted the church. The obligations of personal duty have been commuted on the principle of clerical substitution.

But we are reminded that we cannot indefinitely extend our thoughts even upon the momentous theme before us. We have given utterance to our sentiments with all frankness and freedom, and in full view of the consequences. We have been all along aware of the enstrangement of confidence, of the alienated sympathy, which the declaration of such sentiments will not fail to encounter in the minds of many of our brethren. That they will at first strike them as the very extreme of destructive radicalism, is more than probable. Nevertheless, we have spoken advisedly; and however we may deprecate the unfavourable judgment of those whose good opinion we covet, we are prepared to encounter it, if fidelity to truth makes it inevitable. We have no denunciations to utter against the general body of those who now fill the sacred office; many of whom, it cannot be doubted, entered it with the most upright intentions, and continue to administer it conscientiously with faithfulness and diligence.

But this does not destroy the force of our reasoning. In respect to our main position—the utter antagonism of a priestly or clerical caste to both the spirit and letter of the Christian dispensation—we are firm and immovable. Would that every member of the Lord's church fully appreciated his birthright, and acted under the consciousness of the high privileges involved in it. Regarding it no longer as an exclusive prerogative confined to a certain order, and fixing his thoughts, not upon the shadow but upon the substance, let every Christian realize that, whatever is embraced within the functions of the priestly and the royal office, pertains truly to him under Christ. Every one without exception is a king and a priest, so far as he is truly a Christian. It is not alone in consecrated ranks that we are to look for the priests of the Lord's heritage. Wherever we find a person that is meek, gentle, guileless, truthful and wise—whose spirit is deeply leavened with faith and charity—whose conduct in fact is that of a disciple of Christ—such an one, although never ordained by human hands, we may truly acknowledge as a "priest" unto God.

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